

PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND EMPOWERING WOMEN?:
THE RELEVANCE OF MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOAL 3
IN THE CONTEXT OF GEORGETOWN, GUYANA

MICHELLE BOBALA

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF ARTS

GRADUATE PROGRAM IN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES
YORK UNIVERSITY
TORONTO, ONTARIO

AUGUST, 2013

© MICHELLE BOBALA, 2013

Abstract

By overemphasizing growth through neoliberal economic policies, the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have influenced mainstream development initiatives in a way that has integrated the concepts of 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment' into Millennium Development Goal 3 (MDG3) in loose and limited ways devoid of their original political meaning. Numerous scholars have therefore criticized the MDGs for being insufficient for promoting substantive equality. However, little research has focused on the relevance of the MDGs at the local level. This thesis discusses the extent to which MDG3 is on the development agenda in Georgetown, Guyana, while interrogating the relevance achievements on this Goal have for grassroots women. Through an assessment of MDG3 programming, and an examination of the lived experiences of grassroots women from Georgetown, I argue that MDG3 is not being addressed at the organizational level in Guyana, nor does it speak to urban Guyanese women's needs and priorities.

Acknowledgements

I am indelibly grateful to all of those whom I owe the successful completion of this research. The list begins with my thesis supervisor Dr. Linda Peake who has acted as a mentor throughout this process and believed in me enough to connect me with the amazing women of Red Thread in Guyana where I spent several months learning from their experiences, and about the critical work that they do in an effort to transform conditions for all Guyanese starting with grassroots women. Karen, Andaiye, Nicola, Wintress, Halima, Joycelyn, Vanessa, Shirley, and Norma: in spite of the bumps in the road, truly, thank you for all of what you helped me see and learn on my first visit to Guyana, and enabled me to accomplish on my second. This research would not have happened without you. I would also like to thank all of my respondents who made this thesis possible. Thank you to my organizational respondents for squeezing me into your busy schedules, for your patience and open-mindedness, and your willingness to share your knowledge and understandings with me. Thank you to my grassroots respondents for your warmth, openness, time, and invaluable insights. The minutes and hours that were graciously spent with me for this research do not go unrecognized and are deeply appreciated.

In addition to Dr. Peake, I would also like to thank Dr. Sharada Srinivasan and Dr. Sandra Whitworth for the guidance and feedback you provided me, and for pushing me to make this thesis the best it could be. It has been an inspiration and an honour to have a supervisory committee comprised of all women who have made such significant contributions to feminist scholarship. Furthermore, I am grateful to the Department of Development Studies for giving me the opportunity to be a part of this unique program. The knowledge and experiences I gained have gone above and beyond my greatest hopes and expectations.

Lastly, I would like to thank my mother, my sister and my 'family/other' for your encouragement and ensuring my wellbeing in the most challenging moments of this process. I am also grateful to all of my wonderful friends for your love and support, and to the distractions that brought me joy when it was most needed.

Michelle Bobala

Table of Contents

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements.....	iii
Table of Contents	iv
List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
List of Abbreviations	viii
 Chapter 1 - Introduction	 Error! Bookmark not defined.
Chapter 2 - Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Context of the MDGs and Human Rights.....	16
Introduction.....	16
Addressing Gender Issues in the Guyanese Context.....	16
The MDGs: A Novel Development Framework?.....	19
Gender Dimensions of the MDGs.....	22
The Historical Context of Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in Processes of Development.....	24
Reclaiming Women's Empowerment in the Service of Gender Equality.....	31
MDG3: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women?	33
Growth, Poverty Reduction, and Achieving Gender Equality.....	36
Human Rights, the MDGs, and their Achievement.....	42
Conclusion.....	48
Chapter 3 - Socio-historical Context of Poverty and Inequality in Guyana.....	50
Introduction.....	50
Overview.....	51
The Early Colonial Period and Race Relations (1600-1834)	53
Impacts of Slavery and Indentureship on Gender Relations.....	54
Slavery and Indentureship (1616-1917)	54
Post-indentureship (1917-1960)	57
Gaining 1966 Independence.....	60
Post-independence PNC Lead Co-operative Socialism (1967-1978)	62
Co-operative Socialism and IFI Conditionality (1978-1990s): Women's Role in Feeding the Nation.....	65
Contemporary Guyana and the Existing Urban Context.....	74
Conclusion.....	76
Chapter 4 - Methodology and Methods Producing Bottom-Up Knowledge through Narrative	78
Introduction.....	78
Ontology and Epistemology.....	78
Methodology and Methods.....	83
Methodology.....	83
Methods	87
In-depth Interviews.....	88

Data Analysis.....	98
Interview Data.....	98
Secondary Data.....	101
Conclusion.....	102
Chapter 5 - Inciting Change, or Less of the Same? Institutional Engagement with Gender Issues and MDG3	103
Introduction.....	103
The Primacy given to Economic Growth over Social Justice in the Government of Guyana's Development Policies.....	103
Public Engagement with MDG3.....	110
Institutional Attention to the Issues which Underpin and Comprise the Indicators of MDG3.....	114
Knowledge of MDG3 Indicators and Existing Interventions.....	114
Institutional Actions Initiated for Achievement of MDG3.....	115
How the Education Indicator can Mislead.....	118
Organizational Knowledge and Engagement with MDG3 Indicators.....	120
Awareness of MDG3 Indicators and Tailored MDG3 Programs within the Government.....	121
Paying Lip Service to MDG3?.....	126
A Disempowering Environment for Women's Empowerment	130
Conclusion.....	139
Chapter 6 - The Relevance of MDG3 for Grassroots Women	140
Introduction.....	140
Liberalising vs. Liberating Empowerment in the Context of Women's Lives	141
The Disconnect Between MDG3 and Women's Lived Experiences.....	156
Political Representation	158
Representation in Non-Agricultural Employment	162
Representation in Education.....	169
Conclusion.....	174
Chapter 7 - Conclusion	175
Bibliography	181
Appendices.....	197
Appendix A: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their Relationship with Human Development and Human Rights.....	197
Appendix B: Characteristics of Organizations and Interview Respondents including Key Interview Responses and Declined Interview Contact Attempts.....	201
Table B1: Characteristics of Government Bodies.....	201
Table B2: Characteristics of International Organizations	203
Table B3: Characteristics of NGO and Civil Society Organizations	205
Table B4: Organizational Interviews Sought But Denied.....	206
Table B5: Characteristics of Grassroots Respondents	208
Appendix C: Sample Interview Guides.....	209
Interview Guide for Organizational Respondents.....	209
Interview Guide for Grassroots Women	211

List of Tables

Table 1: Achievement on Indicators of MDG3 as reported in 2007 and 2011 Guyana MDG Reports, and in Developing Regions 2011 and 2012 per MDG World Report	6
Table 2: Percentage Distribution by Nationality Background/Ethnicity and Region Guyana 2002	51
Table 3: Research Objectives and Research Methods Used.....	80
Table 4: Table 4: Basic Food Items for a Family of Six (average size) for one Month (GYD\$).....	146
Table 5: Reported Percentage of Women Engaged in Formal Employment (Total), and Non-Agricultural Employment per the 2002 Census, 2007 Guyana MDG Report and 2011 MDG Report	163

List of Figures

Figure 1: Guyana's Ten Administrative Regions and 2002 Population.....	12
---	----

List of Abbreviations

Guyana

Government of Guyana (GoG)
Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWLI)
Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS)
People's National Party (PPP)
People's National Congress (PNC)
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MoAA)
Ministry of Finance (MoF)
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)
Ministry of Labour and Human and Social Services (MLHSS)
Multiple Index Cluster Survey (MICS)
National Development Strategy (NDS)
Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement (WRSM)
Women of Worth Program (WoW)
Working People's Alliance (WPA)

International

Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)
Caribbean Community for Economic Development (CARICOM)
Caribbean Single Market and Economy (CSME)
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Canadian Council for International Cooperation (CCIC)
Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
Council for Human and Social Development (COSHOD)
Delegation of the EU (Delegation of the European Union)
Department for International Development (DfID)
Development Assistance Committee (DAC)
enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (eHIPC)
Gross National Income per capita purchasing power parity (GNI per capita PPP)
Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC)
Human Development framework (HD)
Human Development Index (HDI)
Human Development Report (HDR)
Inter-American Development Bank (IADB/IDB)
interim Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (iPRSP)
International Development Targets (IDTs)
International Financial Institution (IFI)

International Monetary Fund (IMF)
International Organization for Migration (IOM)
Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)
Non-governmental Organization (NGO)
Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
Official Development Assistance (ODA)
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)
Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)
Taskforce for Education and Gender Equality (TFEGE)
United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF)
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)
United Nations Population fund (UNFPA)
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)
World Bank (WB)

Chapter 1: Introduction

Over the course of the last several decades the issue of for whom and by whom development is constituted has been one frequently taken up in discussions of development theory but has been less effectively tended to in development practice. During the 1980s and 1990s blueprints for development which presumed a link between economic growth and human wellbeing and were modeled after western concepts of modernization and progress, were critiqued for a lack of attention paid to the voices of the poor and marginalized. As a result, development discourses began to acknowledge that lending, aid, and technical assistance were not sufficient for reducing poverty, and underscored the importance of empowering grassroots citizens through bottom-up input and participatory action (Mahadeo, 2009). Furthermore, during the mid 1990s when the World Bank began incorporating social policy into its development approach, concepts such as ‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s empowerment’ began gaining popularity and have since become buzzwords integrated into the language of the international development community¹ (Cornwall & Brock, 2005). As a result, they have become priority themes in the programs and policies of all mainstream development initiatives including the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) framework. However, even in the era of the MDGs which have been positioned as a “development manifesto for ordinary citizens around the world:

¹ In the same period in which the idea of the ‘social’ began to be incorporated into economic models, the World Bank was also in a period of transition moving away from its myopic focus on structural adjustment and fiscal and monetary conservatism. Stiglitz (1998), one of the most outspoken critics of the old paradigm from within the World Bank, proposed the policies which would comprise the “post-Washington Consensus”, which sought to increase social safety nets, integrate top down development with bottom up approaches and foster the notion of social capital in order frame the new consensus as a holistic alternative to the previous set of policy prescriptions (Fine, 1999, p.3). Fine (1999), Elson and Cagatay (2000), Rankin (2002), Cammack (2004), Sumner (2006) and many others have noted that the new consensus does not have transformatory potential, as it integrates the social without questioning structures which facilitate inequality, while often reinforcing them. These scholars argue that because the new consensus is framed as a progressive framework, it simultaneously operates strategically to delimit more transformatory departures from the ubiquity of neoliberal economic policies. According to Cornwall and Brock (2005), and Cornwall (2007), the uptake of the social in macroeconomic policy, has facilitated the proliferation of buzzwords such as “empowerment” which are used for strategic ends by major actors in the field of development, which has resulted in the terms having become devoid of their original political meaning.

time-bound, measurable, pocketbook issues” (UNDP, 2003, p. iv), that could be immediately understood, and could be used as a tool to hold governments and the international community accountable for their achievement by the year 2015, congruence between the needs and priorities of the purported stakeholders of the MDGs, and the interventions and outcomes which this framework produces, are still not evident.

The eight MDGs (see Appendix A, Table A1) were established following the 2000 Millennium Summit in which all 189 member countries of the United Nations at the time, agreed to commit to a “new global partnership” (UNDP, 2003, p.27), which would place human well-being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development objectives through the Millennium Declaration. This commitment emanated out of the failures of the development decades of the 1960s, 70s and 80s which primarily focused on economic growth, and sought a new approach to development through focused attention to human needs. The MDGs became the set of quantifiable targets and indicators distilled out of the Millennium Declaration and its human-centered values, principles and objectives (UNDP, 2003). Each of the MDGs can be directly linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights² as well as to the Human Development approach³ which is premised around expanding human capabilities, or “the range of things that people can be” (UNDP, 2003, p. 28) (see Appendix A, Table A1). The MDGs have thus been publicly positioned as a new development framework, which brings into sharper focus

² The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was established in 1948 following the atrocities and immense loss of life that took place during WWII. The Declaration covers 30 rights every human being is entitled to, and 192 UN member states have signed on in agreement with the Declaration. Signatory states agree to protect the rights covered in the Declaration (United Nations, 2013).

³ The Human Development approach, seeks to expand human capabilities and freedoms or the range of things that people can do, be, and access, and was designed as a direct challenge to the pervasive practice of equating GNP growth with ‘development’ (For a detailed analysis see: Sen, 1992; 1999). The United Nations Development Program (UNDP) defines Human Development as “development of the people, by the people, for the people” (UNDP, 1990, p. 16), and each notion respectively refers to building human resources, ensuring the benefits of growth have direct effect on people’s lives, and that people must play an active role in the processes and decisions which impact development. Since no quantitative measure exists which can fully capture such concepts (or any), three main indices –education, health and income - act as a proxy for Human Development, as they capture the minimum requirements for expanding people’s choices and capabilities.

the need to attend to non-economic dimensions of poverty, and to prioritize human rights. As a result, the 2003 Human Development report, which outlined the impetus behind and the way forward with the MDGs, noted that “environmental sustainability”, “equity-especially gender equity” and an “enabling economic environment” (UNDP, 2003, p. 28) are essential *conditions* for meeting the MDGs and promoting equitable and sustainable development and substantive poverty reduction. These three conditions relate to the “natural”, social, and economic realms respectively, making gender equality the single most important social condition for achieving the Goals and promoting sustainable Human Development according to the report.

Of the eight MDGs, two pertain specifically to women: MDG4 relating to maternal health; and MDG3, which seeks to promote gender equality and empower women. MDG3, which is the primary focus of this thesis and has been a point of specific interest to feminist activists and scholars due to the intrinsic value in promoting gender equality and empowering women, has the unitary target of eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education by the year 2015. Progress on this target is measured by the three quantifiable indicators which include increasing the proportion of women and girls in primary education, as well as formal employment in the non-agricultural sector, in addition to increasing women’s political representation (see Appendix A, Table A1 for the targets and indicators associated with the MDGs). The assumption is such that achieving gender parity in education at all levels is the foundation necessary to empower women and achieve gender equality. However, there are a number of developing-country contexts in which girls and women have had equal representation at all levels of education for several years, yet gender inequality still persists, an experience which is considered to be exacerbated by poverty (UNMP, 2005).

One such context is that of Guyana, South America which, as of 2013 was considered to be the third poorest country in the western hemisphere (World Bank, 2013c), but has through its period with Co-operative Socialism, established a number of *du jure* rights for women, which

have resulted in high levels of representation in education, employment and political life. Based on recent statistics, Guyana had a Human Development Index⁴ (HDI) value of 0.633 in 2011, and in 2010 Guyana had a GNI per capita PPP⁵ of \$3,460 which was only second lowest to Haiti according to World Bank data (World Bank, 2013b). Moreover, according to the 2011 Guyana MDG report, 36.1% of the population was living in moderate poverty, and 18.9% of the population was living in extreme poverty according to data from the most recent poverty assessment conducted in 2006 (Government of Guyana, 2011b, p.2). This means that almost 19% of the population could not afford the GYD\$8,400⁶ the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute estimated that a “normative food basket” of 2,400 calories would cost an adult male, and 36.1% of the population could not afford the \$11,840 it is estimated to cost an adult male living in 40% of the poorest households per month for the same food basket and non-food items such as clothing and shelter (Government of Guyana, 2011b).

It is of important note that these poverty indicators are clearly gendered, and there is no mention of what the basic consumption bundle would constitute or cost for women. Neglecting to report poverty lines which take into account women’s needs fails to acknowledge not only the differential calorie and income requirements of pregnant women but also of women with children who invariably ensure the nourishment, health and protection of their children prior to securing their own. These statistics moreover, hide *de facto* experiences with poverty, as using the cross-

⁴ The Human Development Report (HDI) is an aggregate indicator of well being which takes an average of the values of three indices of human development: education, health and income. This indicator was designed to reframe the way that poverty has narrowly been conceptualized i.e. in economic terms, in order to consider how other factors contribute to experiencing poverty. Guyana's HDI value of 0.633 ranks 117 out of the 187 countries measured on this scale which is below the regional average of 0.731, for Latin America and the Caribbean (UNDP, 2011).

⁵ GNI per capita PPP is the Gross National Income per capita adjusted to purchasing power parity. This value includes GDP plus income from foreign direct investment and wages earned by nationals employed abroad. It also accounts for depreciation of produced and natural (where possible) domestic assets. The value is divided by the mid year population and is converted to international dollars using purchasing power parity rates due to the varying costs of similar commodities internationally. \$1 international dollar in a given country could purchase the same volume of goods and services as \$1 U.S. in the USA (World Bank, 2013b).

⁶ US\$1= GYD\$203 as of July 1, 2013.

national poverty lines without reporting standard deviation between Guyana's administrative regions ignores the differential living situations of urban and rural citizens⁷. The urban poverty rate in 2006 was estimated to be at 18.9% of the urban population, which the 2011 Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)⁸ reported as "about half the national average and significantly lower than the Millennium Development target of 21.6%" (Government of Guyana, 2011a, p.7). However, urban livelihood systems are characterized by a higher level of instability and precariousness, as well as a higher cost of living, due to the importation of food items grown in the hinterland regions and the cost of rents and utilities in urbanized areas (Beall, 1997). As a result, the urban poverty rate of 18.9% in Guyana is unlikely to be an accurate measure of the extent of urban poverty since the cross-national average price of the basic consumption bundle does not account for the additional costs associated with urban livelihoods.

Additionally, despite continued, albeit tepid economic growth -the factor touted as most necessary for poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs (World Bank, 2013a) -the data sets provided in the 2011 PRSP also point to the fact that within the seven year period of 1999 and 2006, the decrease in moderate poverty was statistically insignificant and extreme poverty dropped by less than 3% (Government of Guyana, 2011a). The lack of overall poverty reduction highlighted by data in the PRSP but not reported by the MDG Report, in addition to the failure of

⁷ This points to the caution necessary when interpreting statistical data, not only in terms of how they are reported, but the extent to which any of these statistics (or those to follow within the thesis reported by the Government of Guyana) are actually valid. Even through a cursory analysis of various statistical data published by the government, there are innumerable contradictions and inconsistencies. One of the clearest and perhaps most benign examples is in the reporting of poverty lines which in the 2011 MDG Report are noted as \$11,840 and \$8,400 for moderate and extreme poverty respectively, and in the 2011 PRSP are reported as \$10,494 and \$7,550. Both of these reports refer to the same data for 2006 and relate to the 2006 Household Income and Expenditure Survey, both reports were published in 2011, and both reports were Government of Guyana publications. If such glaring inconsistencies are overlooked in public reports, the validity of the figures reported is questionable as well.

⁸ Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers were first implemented in 1999 as a precondition for debt relief in Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC). These papers outline a country's plan to deal with poverty, and should outline how the country plans to reinvest the forgiven debt into poverty reduction through structural, economic and social policies. The PRSPs were introduced as a precondition for the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country (eHIPC) initiative, which was tabled in 1999 and sought to broaden the number of countries eligible for debt relief, as well as to enhance the extent to which debt relief was provided (World Bank, 2011). Despite being framed otherwise, the PRSPs have replaced the SAPs as a negotiating tool for debt relief and financing, and therefore must include economic policies, which fall in line with the economic policies of the IMF and World Bank and other bilateral donors.

the MDG Report to acknowledge the differential needs of individuals based on gender and region, begins to draw into question the congruence between the outcomes of the MDGs and the needs of Guyanese citizens.

However, in relation to gender equality, the most recent Guyanese and regional MDG reports indicate that gender parity¹⁰ in education has existed at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels since the mid 1990s (UNDP, 2007, p. 15), and as of 2011 girls *outnumbered* boys at the secondary and tertiary level (UNDP, 2011, pp. 25-26) (see Table 1). In spite of this, and in addition to relatively high levels of representation on the other two indicators of MDG3, where women now comprise 31.3% of National Parliament, and have 33% of the share of waged employment in the non-agricultural sector (Government of Guyana, 2011b, pp.24-28) (see Table 1), women are still socially and economically disadvantaged compared to their male counterparts (Charles-Gumbs & Stuart, 2011; Government of Guyana, 2011b).

Table 1: Achievement on Indicators of MDG3 as reported in 2007 and 2011 Guyana MDG Reports⁹, and in Developing Regions 2011 and 2012 per MDG World Report

MDG3 Indicator	Achievement on MDG3 Indicator from 2007 Guyana MDG Report	Achievement on MDG3 Indicator from 2011 Guyana MDG Report	Achievement on MDG3 Indicator In Developing Regions 2011 and 2012
3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education respectively ¹⁰	0.96; 1.02; 1.03	1.0; 1.1; \cong 1.4	(2011) 0.97; 0.96; 0.98
3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non- agricultural sector	35%	33%	(2011) 48%
3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament	29%	31.3%	(2012) 20%

Source: 2007 and 2011 Guyana MDG Reports and The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013¹¹

⁹ The sources of this data and the years from which they were collected are not clearly outlined in neither the 2007 nor 2011 MDG report, but for the 2007 report range from 2002-2006, and for the 2011 report range from 2006 to 2010

¹⁰ The 2015 MDG gender parity Target is an index between 0.97 to 1.03

¹¹ See Government of Guyana, 2011b and UNDP, 2013a

Other than the data reported within the MDG reports, a high priority has not been accorded to acquiring accurate data on women's status in Guyana over the last decade (Trotz, 2010). However, what research does exist recognizes women's continued marginalization, while acknowledging a high level of agency in their daily lives. Das (2000) found that Guyanese women exert significant *control* over resources pertaining to the domestic and community realms, but have difficulty accessing resources such as jobs and fair wages, and exerting their agency in traditionally male dominated domains. This manifests in significant personal decision making power in relation to the interconnected and mercurial spheres of domesticity, community and the labour market, especially when women are heads of households, take part in the informal economy where they share childcare responsibilities with female family members and neighbours, and have flexibility in their working hours and arrangements (Das, 2000). Therefore, Guyanese women, as part of the broader Anglophone Caribbean, cannot "be accommodated into private/public dichotomies which [confine] them to home, domesticity and motherhood and though constrained by patriarchal ideology and practice, they [do] not suffer the same subordinate status in relations with their menfolk" (Barrow, 1998, p. xi). At the same time, women's economic autonomy is very low due to women's limited access to "skills, wages, occupations and services" (Das, 2000, p. 1946). This has resulted in labour market segregation where women are over-represented in low-waged, precarious work, and in those cases where women are formally employed, it is usually in pink-collar positions subjected to a glass ceiling and institutionalized sexism (Das, 2000; Trotz & Peake, 2001). As a result, gender relations appear to continue to influence women's social and economic status.

This conclusion is strengthened with findings from the 2004 Guyana CEDAW country report which suggests that 50% of all women are living in poverty and approximately 30% of

female-headed households are characterized by absolute poverty (CEDAW, 2004)¹². The same report also stated that “the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the National Development Strategy Paper have both given recognition to the fact that women account for most of the poor in Guyana” (CEDAW, 2004, p. 36). Therefore, in spite of favourable results on the indicators of MDG3, according to these findings women in Guyana comprise the largest economically disempowered group. Moreover, the United Nations Statistical Division (UNSD) indicates that *all* of the MDGs should be disaggregated by gender (UNSD, 2008), however, in relation to MDG1 the goal seeking to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, the 2011 Guyana MDG Report makes the claim that there were no gender differentials in the poverty rate according to the findings of the most recent poverty assessment, the 2006 Household Income and Expenditure Survey (HIES) (Government of Guyana, 2011b, p. 4), which unfortunately is not accessible to the public. However, given that the MDG report does not report any specific data from the HIES it is impossible to be able to understand the basis on which this claim, so contrary to all other available data, is made.

¹²While a more recent CEDAW country report for Guyana exists (2010), this report was mostly reticent on the issue of gender being a predictor of the incidence of poverty, merely stating that “although 67% of the population in 1991 lived below the poverty line and this has been reduced to 35% in 2008, the existence of poverty is still a major factor in the advancement of all people, but more especially women” (CEDAW, 2010, p.78). This is particularly interesting because according to the data sets provided in the 2011 PRSP, the overall reduction in poverty between 1999 and 2006 was statistically insignificant (36.3% in 1999 and 36.1% in 2006) which leads one to question how women could have gained so much ground in a 7 year period during which statistical indicators had not detected a statistically significant change. This may be because the surveys upon which the 2010 CEDAW report was based (World Bank and Guyana Bureau of Statistics Household Income and Expenditure Survey, 2006; World Bank Guyana Poverty Assessment: Accelerating Poverty Reduction, 2008) were supported by the World Bank whose official position, according to a World Bank consultant, is such that gender is not considered to be a predictor of poverty in Guyana (R. Longmore, Personal communications, August 10, 2012; also see Government of Guyana, 2011a, p. 10), while the 2004 CEDAW report used data from the 1999 Guyana Survey of Living Conditions supported by the UNDP. It is also interesting to note the 2001 PRSP (also a World Bank backed document) acknowledged the disproportionate number of women in poverty compared to men, while in the 2011-2015 PRSP this tune had completely changed. Rather than this information signalling an improvement in women’s status, it signals a lack of commitment to producing and reporting quality data disaggregated by sex.

Furthermore, Andaiye (2000) notes that even when independent Caribbean quantitative poverty assessments, like Le Franc and Henry-Lee's (2000), come to similar conclusions regarding the lack of poverty differentials between men and women, she cautions against the use of such data without a deeper analysis of intra-household dynamics which dictate the allocation of resources, and dimensions of poverty not easily accounted for by numerical representation of women's earnings or their visibility in economic or political life. Guyana's most recent PRSP itself indicates that its:

approach [to] measuring consumption at the household level imposes the assumption of equality in consumption within the household. Qualitative data would be needed to have a detailed analysis if this is indeed the case, or if there are possible intra-household inequalities that are unobserved so far (Government of Guyana, 2011a, p.11).

Not only is an analysis of intra-household dynamics necessary, but also an accurate evaluation of women's wages in relation to men's, in addition to the number of hours per day they spend in market and non-market related activities such as unpaid care work. If women are working twice the number of hours for the same wages by also shouldering the burden of care work which contributes to the health and productive capacity of future workers in the labour market, we could scarcely speak of improvements to quality of life (which is the intended end of poverty reduction), or an increase in women's level of empowerment and equality. The fact remains that in most Caribbean households, as is the case in other parts of the world, women are responsible for the care of children and the elderly. Furthermore, since their incomes generally contribute to the wellbeing of the entire household, many Caribbean feminists, including Antrobus (2006), argue that women's poverty is "more severe than men's, and has more serious consequences on vulnerable groups" (p. 44) including poorer health, education and life outcomes.

As a result of this and the fact that experiences with poverty and gender inequality are hidden by the limited statistical indicators of the MDGs, it must be asked whether the Goals have any relevance for poor women in spite of the rhetoric which asserts the orientation of the MDGs

to be focused on the poor. Because achievements on the indicators of MDG3 are quite high in the Guyanese context, and women should therefore experience some degree of empowerment and gender equality according to the MDG framework, Guyana offers a unique case study in which to examine the uptake and relevance of MDG3 for both organizations and poor women.

In general, scholarship around the MDGs has taken place either from a conceptual standpoint, or by addressing the tepid progress made on many of the indicators of the MDGs from a cross-national perspective. Much of this literature is critical of the MDGs, and also highlights the implausibility of their achievement due to the economic climate in which they are to be implemented, their inattention to the means of development over the ends, and with regard to women's rights, the exclusion of numerous important issues agreed to within the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA)¹³. However, little research has focused on how gender equality and women's empowerment are being perceived and approached at the local level where the MDGs are ostensibly to be making an impact. Furthermore, while attention by the government and Non-governmental Organizations (NGOs) has understandably been focused on the high rates of rural poverty in Guyana, in recent years little published research has focused on the urban poor, and a gap in the literature exists where it concerns the lived experiences of urban Guyanese women since the establishment of the MDGs.

Furthermore, recent research on gender and cities indicates that women are overrepresented in urban contexts, and while they make a substantial contribution to the wealth that accumulates

¹³ The Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) outlined 12 critical areas of concern which governments, the private sector, and civil society should pay sustained and strategic attention to in order to promote gender justice. These include: 1) The exacerbated burden of poverty on women; 2) Unequal access to, and inadequacies in education and training; 3) Unequal access to, and inadequacies in health care and related services; 4) The elimination of violence against women; 5) The conditions of women living in situations of conflict and under foreign occupation; 6) Inequality embedded in economic structures and policies; 7) Unequal sharing of power and decision-making; (8) Inadequate mechanisms for the advancement of women; 9) The inadequate promotion and protection of women's human rights; 10) Women's biased inclusion in and unequal access to communications systems, 11) Gender inequalities in the outcomes of Natural Resource management, and; 12) Violation of the rights of the girl child (Adapted from UN Women, 1995).

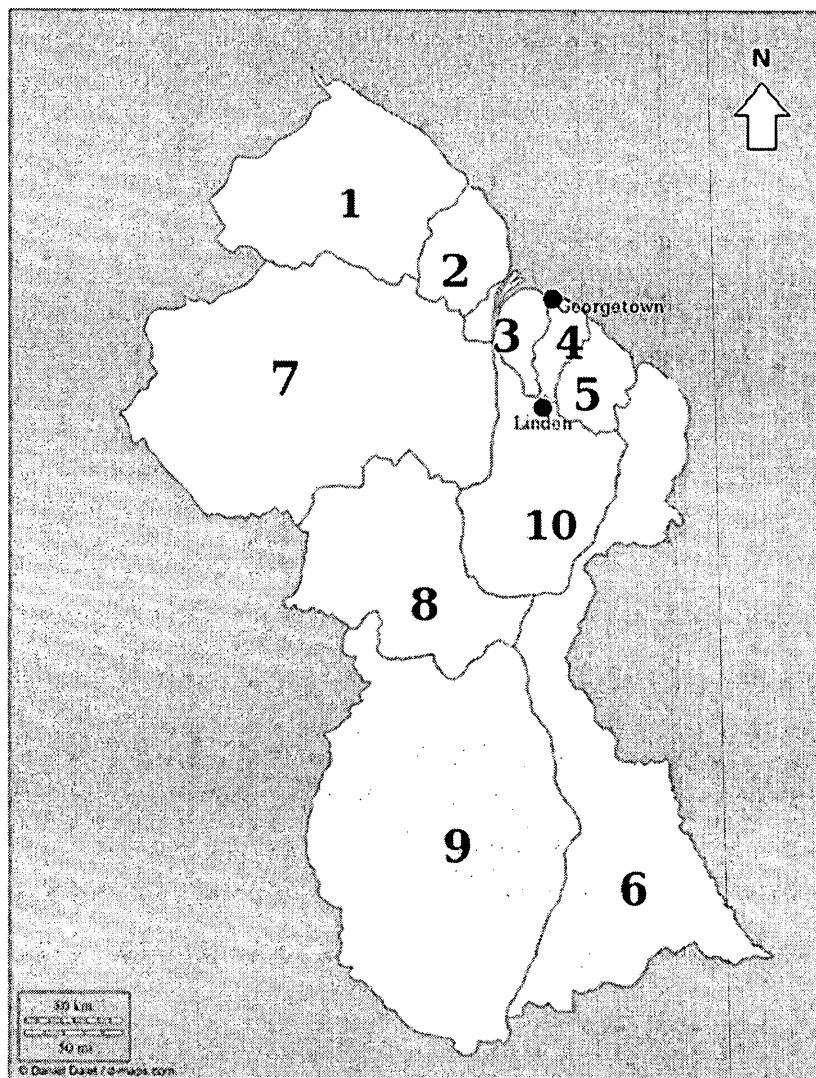
in urban centers, women do not receive an equal share of the benefits of this prosperity in proportion to their productive output (Chant, 2013; Peake & Rieker, 2013). Guyana's 2002 Census indicated that women outnumber men by 2% in Region 4¹⁴ where the capital Georgetown is located (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 38), and if the sex ratios between 2002 and 2006 remained approximately the same, that would mean that there were over 6,000 more women than men inhabiting this region during the period from which the most recent MDG Report drew its data. Furthermore, according to the most recent poverty assessment (the 2006 Household Income and Expenditure Survey), approximately 32% of the population of Region 4 is considered to be living in poverty (Government of Guyana, 2011a, p. 8), resulting in approximately 2,000 more women than men living in poverty in Region 4¹⁵ (see Figure 1).

Thus, since the MDGs were positioned to have a strong poverty reduction focus, Guyana, with its high incidence of poverty both overall and for women in the urban context of Georgetown, provides an interesting case study to examine the relevance of the third Goal seeking to empower women and increase gender equality (MDG3) at the local level. As a result, the objective of this thesis is twofold. First, it seeks to establish the prevalence of MDG3 related programs and policies in Guyana in order to assess their relevance at the national and community level. Secondly, it seeks to examine the lived experiences of women from Georgetown to establish the relevance of MDG3 for them, given that as they are said to comprise one subset of stakeholders of the MDG framework (UNDP, 2003).

¹⁴ Guyana comprises ten Administrative Regions (see Figure 1) and Georgetown is located in Region 4, which spans approximately 240km². The 2002 Guyana Census did not provide disaggregated data for Georgetown, thus data for Region 4 is referenced to provide context.

¹⁵ The 2002 population of Region 4 was estimated to be 152,136 for males and 158,184 for females. The 2011 MDG report asserts that 32% of region 4 was living in poverty based on data from the 2006 household income expenditure survey. Therefore, assuming that the sex ratio between 2002 and 2006 remained approximately the same, it can be estimated that 48,683 males were living poverty, and 50,618 females were living in poverty, a difference of 1,935 females.

Figure 1: Guyana's Ten Administrative Regions and 2002 Population¹⁶



© Daniel Dalet / d-maps.com

Index

1 Barima-Waini 24,275	6 East Berbice-Corentyne 123,695
2 Pomeroon-Supenaam 49,253	7 Cuyuni-Mazaruni 17,597
3 Essequibo Islands-West Demarara 103,061	8 Potaro-Siparuni 10,095
4 Demarara-Mahaica 310,320	9 Upper Takutu-Upper Essequibo 19,387
5 Mahaica-Berbice 52,428	10 Upper Demarara-Berbice 41,112

¹⁶ Adapted from d-maps.com and Bureau of Statistics Guyana (2007).

The thesis makes two central arguments. First, it argues that MDG3 related programs and policies in Guyana are being implemented in a limited way, and highlights that the language of the MDGs is tenuous in the day-to-day parlance of government agencies and public organizations dedicated to development and women's issues. This dimension of the study contributes to critiques of the MDGs by providing meso-level evidence of the inability of the framework to be effectively taken up throughout all levels of organizations' bureaucracies which, can both stagnate achievement on the Goals, and delimit their capacity to promote human rights and Human Development by mobilizing grassroots citizens to advocate for the achievement of the Goals.

Second, the thesis argues that the MDGs are too superficial to be relevant in the day-to-day lives of grassroots women. The insights of grassroots women point to numerous issues which include experiences with precarious housing, underemployment, the double burden of care work and paid employment and the risk of domestic violence. Few if any of these issues appear to coincide with the indicators of MDG3. These findings will help fill a gap in the sparse literature on the conditions under which urban Guyanese women have been living. Moreover, the research is significant as it has produced knowledge that emanates from the poor and marginalized through women's voices. In doing so it supports feminist critiques of the MDGs.

In the following six chapters I will attempt to elucidate how top-down, growth-led development approaches, such as the MDGs, contribute to Guyanese women's inability to become substantively empowered. In an effort to contextualize why the MDGs appear to have little relevance for women in the Guyana, Chapter Two clarifies the social and conceptual context of the study and continues to explore the literature around the MDGs. It will discuss feminist debates around conceptions of gender equality and women's empowerment, highlight the impetus behind, and the inception of the MDGs, identify critiques of their Human Development and

human rights dimensions, as well as the macroeconomic environment in which the MDGs are couched. The themes explored in this chapter will be used to frame the analysis in chapters Four and Five.

Chapter Three will discuss the socio-historical dimensions of contemporary social, political and economic issues in Guyana in order to frame the environment in which Guyanese women's experiences with the development process unfold. In particular it examines the impact that development processes have had on gender relations, and the extent to which the promotion of women's rights has resulted in improvements to their lives. This chapter will also elucidate what kind of conditions these processes have created for women both at the daily experiential level and for the political climate in which policies for the promotion of women's rights are negotiated.

Chapter Four outlines the methodological considerations taken into account throughout this qualitative research project. It highlights the epistemological underpinnings of the research approach, and describes my understanding of knowledge production. This includes an overview of my commitment to transnational feminist praxis and non-oppressive research practice. The chapter further details the sampling procedures, methods and tools used in the study and acknowledges the limitations of the research.

Chapter Five discusses the extent to which representatives of organizations interviewed have a working knowledge of MDG3 and its indicators, and whether associated programs and policies appear to exist in Guyana. Furthermore, the chapter highlights how the purported integration of the MDGs including MDG3 into the Guyana PRSPs appears to have detracted attention from more progressive indigenous development policy platforms and is delimiting attention to the priorities outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA).

Chapter Six discusses the relevance which the MDGs appear to have for urban Guyanese grassroots women through an analysis of women's day to day coping strategies. It sheds light on the limited economic opportunities available to women due to care-work responsibilities, and the scant benefits which educational achievement and formal sector employment have provided some of the respondents in their daily lives. The chapter also discusses some of the greatest challenges the respondents face negotiating their livelihoods while trying to ensure the health, wellbeing and security of their families and their households.

Chapter Seven, the conclusion, briefly underscores the departures from the prescribed approach of the MDGs and their theoretical impact in the real world context of Georgetown Guyana, in order to make the argument that the MDGs are an insufficient framework to promote substantive equality and empowerment for women while meaningfully reducing poverty. Recommendations are made for future research, in addition to improving efficacy and impact of existing approaches at the local level.

Chapter 2: Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Context of the MDGs and Human Rights

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the context and scope of the research project and to highlight the gap in the literature that this research helps to fill. The first section outlines the concept of gender and how it continues to have an impact on social relations and inequality, and as such provides a relevant frame of analysis for the current study. This is followed by an outline of the impetus behind the MDGs and how the United Nations (UN) framework sought to approach their achievement. An explanation of the gender related dimensions of the MDGs is also included. The chapter then goes on to highlight some historical and contemporary conceptualizations of the terms “gender equality” and “women’s empowerment” in order to frame how dominant actors, have and continue to use, the terms while juxtaposing them against definitions which have much greater potential for inciting substantive change. The final three sections outline some of the critiques levelled against the MDGs, which speak to why the MDGs are insufficient for achieving poverty reduction and *de facto* gender equality, in an attempt to help elucidate how these theoretical critiques apply to the real world context of Georgetown, Guyana in later chapters.

Addressing Gender Issues in the Guyanese Context

The impetus behind this research stemmed out of an interest in what relevance top down development strategies have within national contexts. As previously mentioned, Guyana constitutes the third poorest country in the Western Hemisphere in economic terms, and has the fifth lowest reading on the Human Development Index (HDI) in the region, which provides a pertinent context in which to examine the relevance of the MDG framework which, through two of the eight Goals, was both positioned to reduce poverty and empower women. The focus on Guyana and the issues of gender equality and women’s empowerment emanates from my

experience working with a grassroots women's organization, Red Thread, in Guyana prior to beginning my research which further reinforced my interest in women's empowerment and gender equality as political concepts, rather than as technocratic goals to be achieved. My interest in the research topic stems from the understanding that although gender is only one of many axes of difference which mediate unequal power relations, it is nonetheless a social construct which continues to have a strong impact on the various responsibilities, modes of conduct, and access to resources and activities which are of relevance to men and women. As a structure, gender regulates behaviour in subtle ways, and is reinforced through historical and cultural practices. The gendered roles that are ascribed to women have historically accorded them a disadvantaged position. These roles are often resistant to change because through processes of hegemony they are perceived as natural, and the "subordination is not externally imposed but internalised as part of a culture, consciousness and identity" (Srinivasan, 2012, p. 23). This reproduces differentiated levels of social and economic power, for men and women, and has global ramifications. No country in the world treats men and women equally, but women's disadvantage is exacerbated by living in poverty (UNMP, 2005), an experience that is highly prevalent in Guyana.

It is also important to recognize that Guyanese women are part of a broader Anglo-Caribbean¹⁷ region in which there has been a strong women's movement that has helped to achieve a number of *de jure* and even *de facto* rights, yet women are still socially and economically disadvantaged (Andaiye, 2003; Charles-Gumbs & Stuart, 2011; Government of Guyana, 2011b; Peake & Trotz, 1999; United Nations, 2011). This, in addition to the fluid family structures that are characteristic of Anglo-Caribbean societies especially in Afro-Caribbean households, has allowed women to exert considerable independence and agency in their own

¹⁷ The Anglophone Caribbean refers to the independent English speaking countries of the Caribbean region formerly occupied by Great Britain. These include both the island and mainland nations of Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts and Nevis, St. Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, and Trinidad and Tobago.

lives, limiting them from being accommodated into the existing rhetoric of victimhood and helplessness associated with the notion of the quintessential 'third world woman'¹⁸.

Understandings of women's disadvantage are further complicated by age, religion, location, ethnicity and class which intersect in Georgetown, as in all urban contexts, to produce variegated encounters with inequality and marginalization (Chant, 2013; Das, 2000). These issues will be explored further in the following chapter. However, it is important to note that the colonial experience, which dislocated people and their cultures and differentially controlled the behaviours and activities of specific groups for economic or moral reasons, has translated into a plurality of experiences for contemporary Guyanese women, not easily reducible to singular social markers, or specific social or economic deprivations outside of the roles and responsibilities ascribed to them on the basis of their womanhood. As a result, an over-simplistic and reductive conception of empowerment and equality, such as the one offered by the MDGs through its indicators (see Appendix A, Table A1), is unlikely to be sufficient for addressing the complexity of the relationship between Guyanese women and their ability to achieve gender equality.

This thesis does not seek to generalize broadly about Guyanese women's experiences, nor to undertake a comprehensive impact assessment of the MDGs. Rather, it attempts to understand if attention is being paid to the empowerment of women and the promotion of gender equality through institutional engagement with MDG3 in Guyana. It also seeks to give voice to some of

¹⁸Mohanty (1988/2003) and numerous other southern feminist scholars critique the concept of a monolithic "Third World Woman", which historically occupied Western feminist literature and connotes a poor, oppressed and marginalized women without agency requiring 'development'. Mohanty's seminal piece "Under Western Eyes", disrupts this categorization, and argues that in categorizing women as a coherent group "difference becomes coterminous with female subordination and power is automatically defined in binary terms: people who have it (read: men) and people who do not (read: women)" (Mohanty, 2000, p. 31). The lived realities of both women *and* men from the global South (as everywhere) are far more complex, and their experiences with power and agency are influenced by the intersection of place, race, class and other axes of difference, which disrupts the salience of these reductive categorizations. For a discussion of these issues in the Caribbean context, see: Barrow, 1998; Mohammed, 2002; Momsen, 1993; Mohammed & Sheppard, 1999.

the concerns of poor urban Guyanese women living in Region 4 in which the capital Georgetown is located, and where approximately 40% of the population is concentrated (see Figure 1, Chapter One) (Bureau of Statistics, 2007, p. 51). Based upon the interviews from a sample of twelve grassroots respondents, urban poverty appears to be the major constraint on women's choices, irrespective of ethnicity, age or religion. The data seek to augment existing literature and explore in-depth some of the issues poor urban women face in order to identify whether the indicators of MDG3 have relevance for women in Georgetown living under similar conditions.

The MDGs: A Novel Development Framework?

The MDGs have been endorsed as a virtual panacea for curing the world of its development woes. The popular media has helped to package and brand the MDGs as the most innovative means for halving the number of people globally living on a dollar a day or less, in addition to making improvements in a number of other important health and social issues including the promotion of women's empowerment and gender equality. Beginning with MDG1, which is perhaps the loftiest goal seeking to reduce extreme poverty and hunger by half, the eight MDGs and their 18 targets range in focus and aim through their 48 indicators to improve major aspects of social and economic life in developing countries (see Appendix A, Table A1). The MDGs were established to target what the 2003 Human Development Report (HDR) referred to as some of the "most enduring failures of human development" (UNDP, 2003, p.27). The failure in meeting many of these Goals was discussed at great lengths at the September 2000 Millennium Summit, and the conclusions of the summit drew attention to a number of key areas requiring global commitments and immediate action in order to ensure the safety, security, equity and the sustainable future of human populations. The most pressing priority included the eradication of extreme poverty which existed (and continues to exist) at unacceptably high levels. The 2003 Human Development Report, which carefully detailed the impetus behind, and the requirements

for meeting the MDGs, acknowledged that the priorities and themes included in the MDGs were not new, but

unlike the objectives of the first, second and third UN Development Decades (1960s, 1970s, 1980s), which mostly focused on economic growth, the Goals place human well being and poverty reduction at the centre of global development objectives—an approach advocated by the *Human Development Report* since its inception (UNDP, 2003, p.27).

According to this line of reasoning, there are a number of factors that were to set the MDGs apart from previous development approaches giving them a certain novelty, and the potential to transform development outcomes. According to the HDR, these appear to include:

- 1) goals with results oriented targets and clearly defined deadlines;
- 2) an attempt to incorporate Human Development, human rights and tangible goals into a single framework;
- 3) a “compact” between rich and poor nations to work together to achieve the Goals through reorientation of priorities and a “system of shared responsibilities” (p. 15), and the recognition that poverty can only be eradicated “through increased action by rich countries- expanding trade, relieving debt, transferring technology and providing aid” (p. 27);
- 4) being the first globally agreed upon development framework “with a clear focus on, and means to engage directly with, the world’s poor people” (p. iv).

The MDGs were thus positioned to be a platform from which citizens from the grassroots to upper echelons of power could work together to hold governments, corporations and the international community accountable to meeting the Goals, rather than being viewed as a top-down act of “charity” (UNDP, 2003, p.28). As a result, the MDGs are the first results and Human Development/human rights oriented development framework to be agreed upon, and implemented by all member states of the United Nations, which include countries from both the global North and South.

However the 2003 HDR is cautious to note that the MDGs are not a “programmatic instrument” (UNDP, 2003, p. v) and the Goals will only be achieved if there is a sound set of

nationally owned and driven development policies designed around the Goals specific to each individual country's needs. Therefore the MDGs and corresponding UN documents and reports are very general in their policy recommendations, as the needs, priorities and resources of each country are different. However, in order to meet long-term goals such as the MDGs, countries require medium-term strategies for their achievement. For most low and low-middle income countries these medium-term strategies are outlined in Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) (UNDP, 2003). PRSPs, which have a history preceding the MDG framework, were first introduced in order to broaden the number of countries eligible for debt relief, as well as to enhance the extent to which debt relief was provided. These papers should outline how the country plans to reinvest the forgiven debt into poverty reduction through structural, economic and social policies. The PRSPs became the way for the World Bank and IMF to engage with citizens of highly indebted countries, to receive feedback on their needs and to foster participation and ownership over the policies outlined in the plan (World Bank, 2011). Since the implementation of the MDG framework, the expectation has been such that the PRSPs will reflect adapted MDGs for the specific country context in order to outline what kind of financial support might be needed to meet the MDGs as long term goals, and to create a structure for their implementation and monitoring (UNESCAP, 2006).

As a result, while the MDGs are a supranational framework with standardized goals applying to all countries that signed onto the Millennium Declaration, the expectation of national ownership and adaptation to the local context was implied. From this perspective, it could be argued that the MDGs were a novel and potentially transformative development framework, however as we will see in the following sections, the way in which the MDGs have been implemented and frame women's empowerment and gender equality, have been neither new nor transformatory. This is in part because of the primacy given to policies which promote growth

within the PRSPs. In spite of the fact that PRSPs were to be consultative, country owned and were no longer to have non-negotiable conditionalities imposed on them by the World Bank and IMF, *The Economist* magazine pointedly noted that “the shift in fashions [to PRSPs] should not be exaggerated. Where before donors told governments what to do now governments largely tell donors what they want to hear” (as cited in Sumner, 2006, p. 1407).

The Gender Dimensions of the MDGs

Aside from the title of MDG3 “empowering women and improving gender equality”, its target and three indicators (see Appendix A, Table A1), the MDGs are entirely non-committal on how gender equality and women’s empowerment should be approached or defined. The 2003 HDR and the Official United Nations Site for the MDG indicators only go as far as to say that the Goals are designed to be interrelated so that achievement in one target or Goal supports achievement in others, and that the Goals should be “disaggregated by sex and urban/rural as far as possible” in order to more comprehensively track progress (UNSD, 2008, p. 1). In other words, “the achievement of Goal three depends on the extent to which each of the other Goals addresses gender based constraints and issues” (UNMP, 2005, p. 2).

Since the MDGs themselves do not provide an explicit definition of gender equality and women’s empowerment, the Millennium Project, an independent initiative commissioned by the UN Secretary General and UNDP administrator to seek out the most effective strategies for achieving the MDGs, defines ‘empowerment’ as “a woman’s ability to control her own destiny” (UNMP, 2005, p. 33) and ‘gender equality’ as equal access to “education, health and nutrition”, equal access to “economic assets and resources” and “reduced vulnerability to violence and conflict” (UNMP, 2005, p. 31-32). These definitions are a strategic move on the part of the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality to include a number of issues included in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) that were excluded from the MDGs. Moreover, the definitions of the

concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment address seven priorities¹⁹ which the Taskforce on Education and Gender Equality has identified as "needing immediate action if Goal 3 is to be met by 2015" (UNMP, 2005, p. 3). Since the Task Force identified these priorities as imperative for the achievement of MDG3, it would follow that governments should integrate them into their national MDG strategy in addition to the MDG3 indicators. Unfortunately, in the limited research that exists around PRSP content, this does not appear to be the case (Schech & Dev, 2007).

These priorities constitute a much broader array of issues, which if addressed, would have an impact on promoting substantive equality and empowerment for women. However, despite the positioning of Human Development and poverty reduction as central objectives of the MDG framework, the framework instead appears to be informed by an economic growth based development model rather than one that assesses the adequacy of economic policies on how well they facilitate poverty reduction and social justice, including equality between men and women (Schech & Dev, 2007). Poor women and adolescent women are two of three core target groups that the Taskforce on Gender Equality and Education identified as those through which, and for whom, the greatest benefit could be attained if action on the seven priorities is undertaken. While part of the motivation for focusing on these groups may be altruistic, it is evident that targeting these demographics serves a broader development purpose under a market oriented development model. Improving gender equality and empowering poor women are stated to be important

¹⁹The priorities include: 1) Strengthening opportunities for post-primary education for girls while simultaneously meeting commitments to universal primary education; 2) Guaranteeing sexual and reproductive health and rights; 3) Investing in infrastructure to reduce women's and girls' time burdens; 4) Guaranteeing women's and girls' property and inheritance rights; 5) Eliminating gender inequality in employment by decreasing women's reliance on informal employment, closing gender gaps in earnings, and reducing occupational segregation; 6) Increasing women's share of seats in national parliaments and local governmental bodies; 7) Combating violence against girls and women. Adapted from Taskforce on Gender Equality and Education Report "Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women" (UNMP, 2005, p.3).

because “the wellbeing and survival of poor households depend on the productive and reproductive contributions of their female members” (UNMP, 2005, p.4). And in the case of adolescent women “the sheer size of the current adolescent cohort in poor countries means that interventions to improve their lives will affect national outcomes” (UNMP, 2005, p.4). In other words, in spite of the position of the taskforce which asserts that “Goal 3 has intrinsic value in itself” (UNMP, 2005, p. 2), empowerment and gender equality under the MDGs are being positioned as a means by which economic growth will be achieved within a framework that does nothing to challenge its neoliberal underpinnings that exploit women’s labour, and have contributed to their disadvantaged position in the first place.

The Historical Context of Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in Processes of Development

Approaching empowerment and gender equality from a utilitarian perspective is not a novel practice, and has its roots in post Bretton-Woods²⁰ development strategies. Danish economist Esther Boserup’s influential study *Women’s Role in Economic Development* in 1970 argued that new technologies to promote efficiency in agriculture and cash-cropping were being directed toward men, thereby excluding women from the benefits of development brought on by advances in technology. Women were also considered an untapped resource that was delimiting economic growth (Rathgeber, 2005). The policy initiatives that ensued from Boserup’s findings sought to integrate women into the development process by increasing their access to education and technology, and hinged upon the notion that women’s disadvantaged position was predicated upon their limited access to resources (Rathgeber, 2005; Razavi & Miller, 1995b). Therefore,

²⁰ The Bretton Woods Institutions (IMF and World Bank) were established in 1944 in order to rebuild the economies devastated by war to establish international rules for commerce and finance amongst industrial nations. While the Bretton Woods system for financial management terminated in the 1970s, the World Bank and IMF continue to govern the world economy and both organizations are both primarily controlled by the world’s richest nations due to their large monetary contributions creating gross imbalances in governance (See: Jolly, 2010; Peet, 2003; Buira, 2003).

according to the Women in Development (WID) approach, which, Boserup's work initiated, gender equality could be achieved by more effectively integrating women into labour markets. This however, was done without questioning other structures and processes, which perpetuate inequality.

Unsurprisingly, a critique of the limits and the reductionist nature of the WID approach which oversimplified women's subordination by relegating it to their exclusion from labour markets and neglected to account for the diversity of women's experiences, shortly ensued from within the Gender and Development (GAD) framework (Rathgeber, 2005). The GAD approach, founded predominantly by southern feminists (see: Antrobus, 2004; Sen & Grown, 1987; Young, 1993) and which has its origins in the Third World Conference on Women in Nairobi Kenya held in 1985, underscored the fact that women's experiences cannot be homogenized as access to labour markets and other resources are moderated through the intersection of various identities such as gender, ethnicity, class, caste and sexual orientation (Young, 1993). An excerpt from Sen and Grown's (1987) seminal work *Development Crises and Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*, which was central to the development of the GAD approach and became a reference point for the ideas that lead up to the Beijing Platform for Action, highlights their perspective:

The recognition of the existence of gender subordination and the need to break down its structures has often led to the wrong conclusions that it engenders monolithic and universal issues, strategies and methods, applicable to all women in all societies at all times. But a political movement that is potentially global in scope needs greater flexibility, openness and sensitivity to issues and methods as defined by different groups of women for themselves. Feminism is a political movement and as such expresses the concerns of women from different regions and backgrounds. Like all political movements, it can be diverse in its issues, immediate goals and methods adopted. But beneath this diversity, feminism as its unshakeable core is a commitment to breaking down the structures of gender subordination and a vision for women as full and equal participants with men at all levels of societal life. Self-definition is therefore a key ingredient to relevant political action (p.79-80).

This excerpt also highlights the perceived inadequacy of one-size fits all solutions to dealing with inequality. Although male superiority is globally ubiquitous, and men's predominance in, and control over political, economic and social institutions and resources, has a negative impact on "women's views of themselves and their capacities" (Young, 1993, p. 134), the specific factors contributing to these issues vary between contexts and are dependent upon women's individual subject locations. As a result, the GAD framework sought to "understand how gender is interlocked with other forms of social hierarchy" (Young, 1993, p. 135), while also drawing the link between relations of production and reproduction which contribute to women's marginalization (Razavi & Miller, 1995a). To this end, GAD was formed in reaction to WID, in order to bring about women's empowerment and gender equality by dismantling structures of power and subordination through collective action (Razavi & Miller, 1995a; Young, 1993).

By placing gender analysis at the core of policies, programs, legislation and institutional and organizational structures, the GAD approach fostered an intervention termed 'gender mainstreaming'²¹ which was designed to *challenge* unequal power relations (Razavi & Miller, 1995a). These interventions focused around the two core concepts of 'gender equality' and 'women's empowerment', which have since the mid 1990s gained significant popularity in development parlance. The GAD framework originally sought to advocate for change by focusing on empowerment in order to achieve gender and other forms of equality, through gender mainstreaming processes. 'Empowerment' was considered to be the most important principle for change, which was equated with the idea of "women tak[ing] control over their own lives"

²¹ Since it was formally instituted as a development policy in the Beijing Platform for Action (Beijing PFA) in 1995, gender mainstreaming has been an ongoing strategic attempt to put women's needs on the development roster, and today permeates the language and operational principles of mainstream international development agendas worldwide. It refers to any activity which intends to place women at the center of government, state, market, and civil society institutions and organizations, through a series of actions which would enhance women's access to, and participation in social, economic and political institutions and processes and would amend the existing mechanisms which prevent women's advancement in both the public and private spheres (Razavi & Miller, 1995b, p. i).

(Young, 1993, p.44) through collective action for the purpose of subverting multiple social and economic structures of oppression. The aim was at “transforming the dominant discourses on poverty... and [focusing] on aspects of ill being/well being such as domestic violence, respect, participation in decision making, reproductive and sexual rights, freedom of movement, [and] the right to custody of ones own children” Johnsson-Latham, 2010, p. 43).

However, the uptake of gender mainstreaming within institutional contexts has unfortunately been far more integrationist than agenda setting, which is in direct contradiction to the vision that the supporters of the GAD framework had for the gender mainstreaming project. It is easier to create gender focal projects within the existing social and economic system, than to try to subvert systems of power in order to achieve substantive equality. This has resulted in very depoliticized conceptualizations of ‘gender equality’ and ‘women’s empowerment’ that focus on issues of gender parity rather than addressing power differentials and structural barriers to substantive equality. As a result, in spite of the holistic analytical framework that the GAD approach applied to women’s marginalization, gender mainstreaming has not advanced the position of women vis-à-vis men significantly.

This is in part because the vague definitions of gender equality and women’s empowerment that were being used within the GAD framework, could not retain their political underpinnings in the bureaucracies of the institutions in which gender mainstreaming was being implemented (Rowlands, 1997). Cornwall and Brock (2005) suggest that vaguely defined buzzwords “can come to be reconfigured in the service of today’s one-size-fits-all development recipes, spun into an apoliticized form that everyone can agree with. As such ... their use in development policy may offer little hope of the world free of poverty that they are used to evoke” (Cornwall & Brock, 2005, p. iii). In other words Cornwall and Brock and numerous other scholars believe that ‘empowerment’ and ‘gender equality’ have been co-opted by dominant actors in the field of

development as they have become vogue concepts since the mid 1990s when various constituencies of women demanded that their needs be addressed during the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). National and international development organizations alike could no longer ignore women's issues, and using 'empowerment' and 'equality' as slogans, began to integrate these concepts into their existing mandates. As a result, although the UN framework has adopted the political definitions of empowerment and equality envisioned by the founders of the GAD approach²², as bureaucratic buzzwords, the 'gender inequality as resource deprivation' perspective outlined under the WID framework has prevailed. This is because it has been the simplest way to integrate considerations of gender into development practice, and aligns with the

²² The UN framework defines gender equality as the:

equal rights, responsibilities and opportunities of women and men and girls and boys. Equality does not mean that women and men will become the same but that women's and men's rights, responsibilities and opportunities will not depend on whether they are born male or female. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into consideration, recognizing the diversity of different groups of women and men. Gender equality is not a women's issue but should concern and fully engage men as well as women. Equality between women and men is seen both as a human rights issue and as a precondition for, and indicator of, sustainable people-centered development (UN Women, 2013, p. 1).

Furthermore, the Convention for the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) which operates out of the UN framework, calls for the end to all forms of discrimination which prevent women from living as equal citizens within society and brings with it a legal obligation to ensure women's equal status (Facio & Morgan, 2008, p. 21). However, in practice the concept of equality has been reduced to headcounts and quantifiable achievements primarily in relation to incomes and employment without addressing the barriers women have had to surmount to accomplish them. The same is true for empowerment, which the UN defines as:

awareness-raising, building self-confidence, expansion of choices, increased access to and control over resources and actions to transform the structures and institutions which reinforce and perpetuate gender discrimination and inequality. The process of empowerment is as important as the goal. Empowerment comes from within; women empower themselves. Inputs to promote the empowerment of women should facilitate women's articulation of their needs and priorities and a more active role in promoting these interests and needs (UN Women, 2013, p. 2).

growth led operating principles of most development organizations (Cornwall & Brock, 2005; Cornwall, 2007; Batliwala, 2007; Sardenberg, 2008).

As a case in point, under the MDG framework, gender equality and women's empowerment have been reduced to a set of quantifiable targets which seek to improve women's access to education, employment and political representation, resources which facilitate greater market inclusion. As a result of this improved access, women are perceived to experience higher levels of empowerment.

Sardenberg (2008) has termed gender equality and empowerment framed in this way as 'liberalising' rather than 'liberating' empowerment. Liberalising empowerment has its roots in liberal philosophy which was founded on principles of individual liberty, individual rights and equal opportunity" (Sardenberg, 2008, p. 20), and also sought to remove government intervention from the lives of individuals and the market, which became the foundation for neoclassical economics. In the context of development practice, 'liberal empowerment' has been viewed as a purveyor of desired development outcomes such as poverty reduction or democracy, principles which are in line with liberal political theory, and are considered to be achievable through greater access to resources promoted by economic growth. Sardenberg suggests that the way that the concept has been taken up within the World Bank over the last decade has facilitated the "transforming [of] poor women into poor entrepreneurs" (Sardenberg, 2008, p. 21). The international financial institutions (IFIs) and major development practitioners have, thus, viewed empowerment as an activity which can occur "without conflict", and something which can be "donated" through technocratic solutions, and the "participation" and "training" of stakeholders (Sardenberg, 2008, p. 22). Framing empowerment in this way depoliticizes it, undermining the transformatory underpinnings of the term by taking the issue of 'power' out of the equation. It allows these actors to do things the way they have always done them, but with the appearance of

legitimacy through a 'liberalising' version of empowerment, which also quells the threat of conflict and struggle that is inherent in 'liberating empowerment'. This form of empowerment is thus more informed by "pragmatism and efficiency" than "imperatives of social justice" (Chant, 2010, p. 4).

Batliwala (2007) further illustrates this point arguing that during the 1990s when state agencies, professionals and development advocates co-opted 'empowerment' in the Indian context, it "degenerated into a set of largely apolitical, technocratic and narrow interventions that create nothing like the radical transformation envisaged by early women's movement leaders" (p. 559). In this period governments had adopted neoliberal policies, and began framing them in a way that would appear favourable to constituents who were eagerly awaiting the promise of increased incomes resulting from open markets. "Empowerment" became a key slogan, and was promoted through self-help groups that did little more than offer micro-credit style savings and lending, and quotas for women's representation within local self-governance bodies. This reorientation of priorities from the consciousness raising activities and radical organizing which characterized the earlier period of the 1980s resulted in the reframing of empowerment from a concept of "societal and systemic change" to empowerment in the personal domain through achievement and status via economic means (Batliwala, 2007, p. 563; see also Roy, 2010).

McFadden (2010) argues that because 'empowerment' has now been framed in this market oriented manner for over 20 years and has, in her view, given artificial importance to gender as an axis of inequality, the term is unworkable in a transformatory sense due to its focus on the individual rather than the collective. She argues that instead of focusing on women's 'daily struggles' as though there is some shared normative experience, more attention needs to be paid to the social, political and cultural contexts which have perpetuated inequalities along various axes of difference, while acknowledging the collective 'long-term struggles' which marginalized

people of the South have been engaged in “due to historical processes of capitalist extraction, leaving them (and women in particular) economically deprived and peripheral to the larger economic systems dominating the world at the present time” (p. 161).

Reclaiming Women’s Empowerment in the Service of Gender Equality

However, while McFadden’s perspective is valid, I am of the view that ‘empowerment’ in relation to achieving gender equality is still a relevant concept if we return to the way Southern feminists of the GAD approach conceived of it. In this way, empowerment seeks, through individual and collective action, to transform processes of patriarchy and free market capitalism which intersect in various contexts to perpetuate women’s marginalization, albeit differentially. As noted before, while gender is only one social construct upon which inequality is predicated and cannot be divorced from its intersection with racial, class, cultural, historical or place-based identities of any one group or individual, gender is still a social construct which continues to disadvantage women overall, and therefore seeking to empower women substantively as a collective is relevant and has intrinsic value if the situated experience is privileged and the social and historical context is prioritized.

Kabeer (1999) for example defines ‘empowerment’ as the “expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437). Her conceptualization of “empowerment” holds central the notion of context, but also of choice. In considering whether an individual is truly empowered, the “conditions of choice”, the “consequences of choice” and the “transformatory” potential of choice must be examined otherwise activities that may appear as empowerment could in fact operate to reinforce systems of power (Kabeer, 1999, pp. 460-461). The conditions can be measured by examining three indivisible indicators. These indicators include “agency (process)”, “resources (pre-conditions)”, and “achievements (outcomes)” (Kabeer, 1999, pp. 460-461, p. 437). For

Kabeer, agency refers to the ability to make choices where alternatives substantively exist and are perceived to exist by the individual exercising choice. In its positive sense, agency refers to the power to act in a way of one's choosing, even when there is opposition from other individuals, society or structures. Agency becomes negative once it is deployed as 'power over', where one's agency undermines that of another individual for the purpose of one's own ends (Kabeer, 2005b, p. 14). Moreover, Kabeer notes that 'cultural' or 'ideological norms', and 'institutional bias' act as structures of power that can delimit *de facto* and perceived choice. Therefore for Kabeer, "agency in relation to empowerment implies not only actively exercising choice, but also doing this in ways that challenge power relations" (2005b, p. 14). Resources refer to the social and material assets to which a person has access, and how accessible those resources are. If access is being mediated by those exerting 'power over' another individual by delimiting access or placing conditions on the use of those resources, the capacity to exert one's own agency will be constrained. Lastly, 'achievements' refer to the outcomes of people's use of resources and deployment of agency. Achievement emanating from empowerment would look like a choice in the midst of other options that increases an individual's ability to live the life they want to live (Kabeer, 2005b).

Kabeer's (2005b) conceptualization of empowerment begins on an individual level, because structures of subordination are often subtle or are bound up in value systems, which, once recognized and objected to, change that individual's perception of themselves, in turn changing how others perceive them. However, this is not sufficient for empowerment, which is transformatory, as it does not go beyond addressing 'immediate inequalities'. Rather, true empowerment operates on a continuum according to Kabeer, where "institutional transformation requires movement along a number of fronts: from individual to collective agency, from private negotiations to public action, and from the informal sphere to the formal arenas of struggle where

power is legitimately exercised” (2005b, p.16). In other words, in order to go beyond addressing immediate inequalities present at the individual level, consciousness raising and collective action are a prerequisite for addressing longstanding and deep-rooted structures of subordination. The ends in these collective actions include freedom from violence and discrimination, freedom to make decisions over one's own sexual and reproductive capacities, and substantively equal access to education, employment and decision making within the domestic, social and political realm. Empowerment can be a useful concept for promoting social change that improves women's lives, if collective political action beginning from personal transformation is re-emphasized, and the above noted human rights become a platform around which women can organize. However, as we will see in the following sections, this is not the form of empowerment that the MDGs seek to achieve.

MDG3: Promoting Gender Equality and Empowering Women?

Feminists have seriously questioned the ability of the MDGs to promote substantive gender equality and women's empowerment (Akram-Lodhi, 2009a/b; Antrobus, 2005; Chant, 2007, Elson, 2004; Kabeer, 2005a/b, Painter, 2004; Saith, 2006;), because women's poverty is a complex issue which according to Bradshaw (2002) is “not only multidimensional, but is also multisectoral... [and]... is experienced in different ways, at different times and in different ‘spaces’”(as cited by Chant, 2010, p.2), and refers to spaces which include “*inter alia* the home, the community, the labour market, the realm of assets and property ownership, the legal environment, the social policy arena, the political economy, and territories of war, conflict and natural disaster” (Chant, 2010, p.2). All of these sites are those in which unequal power relations unfold and have a direct impact on women's wellbeing, yet undue primacy is often given to gender gaps in earnings and expenditure as the primary markers of women's poverty. While the

MDGs were positioned as the world's first development framework to take into account the multi-dimensionality of poverty which includes issues such as "poor health, shortened lives, emotional stress, and social exclusion" (Razavi & Staab, 2010, p. 427), as the previous sections outline and which those to follow will reinforce, women's empowerment within the MDGs is still very much tailored around increasing women's productive capacity and follows an approach of 'gender equity as smart economics' influenced by the World Bank (Bradshaw & Linneker, 2010, p. 516).

As a result, feminist scholars have serious concerns over the ability of the MDGs to address experiences of inequality such as "overwork", 'time deficiency', 'dependency' and 'powerlessness' (Chant, 2010, p. 3), and tie into conceptual critiques of the MDGs which range from concerns over the emphasis on quantifying results which may overlook immeasurable power dynamics that play a large role in social and economic inequality (UNIFEM, 2002; Antrobus, 2005), to the lack of gender related targets and indicators among the MDGs (Antrobus, 2005; Barton, 2005; Saith, 2006). The most pervasive critique however, relates to the limited scope by which gender equality is defined through the indicators of MDG3, the Development Goal specifically seeking to "promote gender equality and women's empowerment" (UNMP, 2005, p. xviii). As previously mentioned, gender equality as it pertains to MDG3 has the unitary target of achieving gender parity in education at all levels by 2015, and is measured through three indicators which include ratios of female participation in 1) primary education, 2) non-agricultural employment, and 3) political representation, which, as a set does not do justice to the multidimensional character by which both inequality and empowerment can be characterized. Saith (2006) has argued that the "HD [Human Development], and now the MDG initiatives have limited their mapping of policy 'alternatives' to the set of interventions which are compatible with the key tenets of the neoliberal policy template" (p. 1179).

Returning to Sardenberg (2008) and McFadden's (2010) critique of how the term 'empowerment' has been taken up in development policy, it is clear that MDG3 is couched in a liberalizing, rather than a liberating discourse as the framing of the goal deviates little from the WID inspired approach to empowerment seeking women's increased access to resources. As a result, many of the hard-won issues agreed upon by CEDAW and painstakingly negotiated between diverse constituencies at the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA) were glossed over, and reduced to the watered-down indicators that currently constitute MDG3. Antrobus urges that this narrowing down is detrimental to women's cause, as the MDGs "have eclipsed the Beijing PFA which represent a much closer approximation of the complexity of the relationships between gender equality and women's empowerment" (Antrobus, 2006, p.39). Although the BPFA and the MDGs come out of the same UN structure, the priorities outlined in the BPFA emanated out of a long democratic process which included the voices of women of the South, NGOs and religious groups whom agreed to the priorities through consultation. The MDGs on the other hand have been critiqued for essentially being a replica of the International Development Targets (IDTs) created by high-level ministers of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) (Kabeer, 2005a; Nelson, 2007; Saith, 2006). Civil society actors consequently felt excluded from both the IDTs and the MDGs due to a lack of multi-level consultation for both frameworks (Kabeer, 2005a), and given that the DAC comprises only high income countries, it is unsurprising that the perception has been such that "the MDGs are a careful restatement of poverty-related development challenges, in language that avoids reference to rights; they are a donor country interpretation of the key issues, for a donor-country audience" (Nelson, 2007, p. 2041). As a result civil society organizations, NGOs and religious organizations feel that the Millennium Goals are a "unilateral narrowing down of the development agenda" (Saith, 2006, p1170).

Because gender equality and women's empowerment are embedded in a liberalizing discourse within the MDGs, the ability of the Goals to promote *de facto* equality and empowerment for women is seriously undermined because MDG3 facilitates neither personal, nor collective social transformation. This is simultaneously because of, and exacerbated by two interrelated issues which will be explored further in the following two sections. First, the inclusion of the MDGs into the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers as a way to work towards the Goals in the medium-term has solidified the growth based development approach of the Goals, despite the rhetoric which positions the MDGs to give primacy to non-economic dimensions of poverty. Second, pursuing the empowerment of women and promoting gender equality for any reason other than its intrinsic value unsettles the human rights positioning of the Goals which delimits the possibility of social transformation.

Growth, Poverty Reduction and Achieving Gender Equality

Jolly (2010) and Akram-Lodhi (2009a) assert there is an erroneous and widespread assumption that there is agreement over the existing macroeconomic framework being sufficient for poverty to be reduced and for the MDGs to be met. This imagined consensus has allowed the IMF and World Bank, the two IFIs which govern the global economic system, and in which decision-making power rests in the hands of countries with the largest economies²³, to promote the neoliberal agenda through the inclusion of the MDGs into PRSPs. The primacy given to neoliberal economic policies for the achievement of the MDGs is well outlined in Berg and Qureshi's (2005) IMF publication on building momentum for the achievement of the MDGs which outlines five necessary conditions to get on track to meeting them: 1) country owned

²³ At the time of writing, the distribution of votes in each organization was primarily decided based on the financial contribution made by each member country. A disproportionately high number of votes are therefore relegated to the largest economies, which include the USA, Japan, Germany, and to some extent China (Driscoll, 2013).

poverty reductions strategies (read PRSPs) in which “particular attention must be given to reinforcing the links between PRSPs and fiscal framework” (p.2); 2) growing the economy as “economic growth must be at the center of any strategy to achieve the MDGs” (p.3); 3) expanding health and education, which is the only mention of social policy in the document, and the discussion only goes as far as the importance of promoting health and education for economic growth; 4) expanding market access as “multilateral, reciprocal, and non-discriminatory trade liberalization offers the best means for realizing the development promise of trade” (p. 5); 5) More and better aid as they argue that “better quality aid matters, too. Aid is more effective in fostering growth and improving service delivery in countries with better policies and institutions” (p.6). These conditions point to the fact that MDG achievement is primarily poised to occur through economic growth.

Given the IMF’s outwardly macroeconomic stance to MDG achievement outlined in Berg and Qureshi’s (2005) review, it is little surprise that MDG ‘compliant’ PRSPs are mostly devoid of social policy. Harrison, Klugman and Swanson (2005) conducted a review for the World Bank in which they examined 40 PRSPs and found that 100% had a focus on poverty reduction through economic growth despite the tenuous relationship between the two, while less than 20% focused on social and environmental issues such as income distribution, housing, women’s representation in politics, and environmental concerns (Harrison, Klugman & Swanson, 2005). Through their inclusion in the PRSPs, the MDGs are resigned to operate under the pretext of a framework which pays heightened attention to multidimensional aspects of poverty through a set of “global, national, and subnational policies designed to tackle human insecurity” (Akram-Lodhi, 2009b, p.12), but simultaneously reinforce the current neoliberal macroeconomic framework that undercuts substantive attention to the Human Development and human rights aspects of the Goals. This is because the primary function of the PRSPs has been as a bargaining tool for

lending and debt relief as discussed earlier in this chapter. Conditionalities which structure the economy in a way which align with the IMF and World Bank priorities are reflected in the PRSPs, and policies which promote increased funding for social services, are not conducive to a growth based model of development to which these IFIs subscribe. Therefore, the likelihood that comprehensive attention will be paid to human rights issues such as women's empowerment and gender equality within national PRSPs and at the institutional level is significantly reduced.

The World Bank and IMF have been guided by the Washington Consensus²⁴, and despite revisiting some of these policies²⁵ after epic failures, and overwhelming evidence surrounding the devastating effects of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) influenced by the Washington Consensus²⁶ the two organizations continue to function on the belief that economic growth will

²⁴ The Washington Consensus emerged out of economist John Williamson's articulation of ten policy prescriptions which were being employed in Latin America, and which he felt that various officials from the government and IFIs in Washington presiding over the conference would concede to as standard measures for economic reform in developing countries. The policies prescriptions of the W.C. included: 1) Fiscal Discipline; 2) Reordering Public Expenditure Priorities; 3) Tax Reform; 4) Liberalizing Interest Rates; 5) A competitive Exchange Rate; 6) Trade Liberalization; 7) Liberalization of Inward Foreign Direct Investment; 8) Privatization; 9) Deregulation; 10) Property Rights (adapted from Williamson, 2003).

²⁵ See footnote 1.

²⁶ Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) were designed to reduce a country's fiscal imbalances facilitated through loans from the IMF and World Bank which were accompanied by conditions requiring governments to restructure national economies in a way which focused on trade and production resulting in a broader market orientation. These programmes were founded upon policies outlined in the Washington Consensus, policies which are now well established to have had devastating impact on the poor who suffered even deeper poverty as a result of the implementation of the SAPs. Given that women are overrepresented in the share of the world's poor, SAPs had a disproportionate impact on women. Some examples include the retrenchment of the state, which resulted in the dismissal of numerous civil servants, many of whom were women. The destruction of traditional industries in which a large proportion of women were employed also had a negative impact because while the introduction of large-scale production in factories and export-processing zones offered new employment opportunities, they also served up low wages and precarious conditions inflexible to women's care-work responsibilities. Cuts in the provision of social and health services and the elimination of subsidies forced women to do more with less, stepping in to fill the gaps where the state scaled back, often sacrificing their own nutrition, health and security in order to provide it for their families and extended social networks (Sadisivam, 1997; Sparr, 1994). Lind (2010) urges that "neoliberal development and capitalist development in general relies on women's elastic or volunteer labour to absorb the cost of broader economic changes; their struggles for survival have become institutionalized and serve as replacements for state support" (p. 650). Also see Peake & Trotz, 1999 on Guyana.

facilitate the ‘trickle-down effect’²⁷ which will increase the wealth of the rich, and lift the poor out of poverty. While this term may no longer occupy the prescriptive language of these organizations, the present lack of clear commitments to redistribution policies and programs that would facilitate reductions in inequality, indicate that the World Bank and IMF’s approach to poverty reduction continues, as before, to be guided by trickle-down (Oxfam, 2013, ¶2). The unsubstantiated but highly cited defence of policies inspired by the Washington Consensus which perpetuates neoliberalism’s unwavering supremacy is such that they “bring –or at least make possible – a wide range of other benefits from rising living standards, stronger public services like education and health, and wider national development, and even produce the additional resources required to tackle environmental problems” (Jolly, 2010, p.24). Antrobus (2005) counters arguments like these by highlighting that when governance around the implementation of the MDGs lies with the state (Goals which we must remember seek to address the above noted issues), its retrenchment as a central tenet of neoliberalism limits the state’s ability to implement and monitor policies that would see them effectively fulfilled. Furthermore policies around trade liberalization limit tariffs, which provide an important source of public revenue for funding education and health care initiatives, which are central to many of the Millennium Goals and their respective indicators. Furthermore, given that the macroeconomic framework of the PRSPs is premised upon other neoliberal policy objectives such as “an ‘enabling’ environment for the private sector based upon internal deregulation and external trade liberalization, a realistic exchange rate and export-led growth” (Akram-Lodhi, 2009b, p.12), it is difficult to imagine how this context could be conducive to improving the lives of low-income men and women, because

²⁷ This theory is premised on the idea that reducing taxes for the rich will create more incentive, through freed capital, for investment and spending, which can generate employment opportunities. The increased wealth accrued by the rich, will therefore “trickle-down” to the poor and would help raise them out of poverty. However this approach does nothing to address the growing income gap, as doing so is actually inimical to the processes involved in this approach. In effect, trickle-down economics are dependent on inequality.

as the following chapter will discuss, SAPs were underpinned by similar policies, and included reductions in wages, destruction of indigenous industries, as well as public expenditure cuts which reduced already limited social safety nets, and left women to make up for the social welfare work no longer provided by the state.

Feminist scholars have noted that giving primacy to the ‘trickledown effect’ as a method of poverty reduction, has facilitated a lack of analysis of the systematic barriers perpetuating income and gender based inequalities. Johnson (2005) has alluded to the fact that this lack of analysis has negative effects on women due to their overrepresentation in the domestic realm of unpaid care work. This is the primary site where unequal power relations based on gender unfold, and includes differential access to financial and other resources. If economic growth does happen to bring increased wealth to a male breadwinner this may or may not benefit the household depending upon the distribution of power and resources in the domestic sphere (Chant, 2003). Moreover, even if the distribution of resources within the household is equitable, and increased incomes improve a woman’s “condition” in the household, her “position is largely left unchanged” (Nelson, 2005, p.63). This is largely due to the fact that economic growth does nothing to question or alter patriarchal structures, nor does it address the unequal time burden shared by women in the home who usually do all of the unpaid care work. This often occurs in addition to paid employment in the labour market for women, where income inequality and discrimination based on gender strongly persist.

Furthermore, feminist economists (Akram-Lodhi, 2009a/b; Cagatay, 2005; Elson, 2001) urge that there is male bias in the existing macroeconomic framework that helps perpetuate market segmentation that relegates women to the domestic sphere or low paid precarious work. This segmentation also has the effect of distorting productivity and incomes, therefore rigorous gender analysis needs to be applied to economic policies so as to consider how the ‘care work

regime' i.e. the production and maintenance of the future and current labour force through women's unpaid care work, contributes to the unequal distribution of resources further perpetuating poverty and marginalization. Schech and Dev (2007) point out that although it is framed by neoliberal discourse, the World Bank has paid lip service, to growing concerns over the economic underpinnings of various forms of inequality. For instance the 2000/2001 World Development Report "Attacking Poverty" urges recognition of the fact that inequality promotes poverty on the basis of discriminatory structures and practices which exclude people from the market, but Schech and Dev argue that the World Bank's own economic policy recommendations in the 2000/2001 report have, for the most part, not been followed in subsequent reports or PRSP documents. Rather, a return to previous approaches which prioritize growth promoting policies without consideration of mediating factors such as gender inequality have been recommended leading the authors to conclude that the World Bank's "difficulty in conceiving gender as relevant to hardcore economic discussion [has] not been resolved" (p. 17).

According to Elson and Cagatay's (2000) review of the 2000/2001 World Development Report, the World Bank and IMF have been in search of a "Post Washington Consensus"²⁸ which

²⁸ The "post-Washington Consensus" was created in response to growing disillusionment with the outcomes of the Washington Consensus in the late 1990s. The new approach was said to have acknowledged "the prevalence of market imperfections and [provided] a rationale for micro and macro interventions on this basis" (Fine, 1999, p. 2). However many critics of the approach such as Cammack (2004), Fine (1999) and Sumner (2006) argue that what has occurred instead is a process of 'deep interventionism', which fosters "community participation and country ownership", for the purpose of a "systematic transformation of social relations and institutions in the developing world" which will facilitate unabated capitalist accumulation (Cammack, 2004, p. 190). The new consensus has two major objectives. The first is the establishment of a strong competitive private sector, and the second is a productive labour force that will allow the private sector to flourish. This is facilitated through improvements in healthcare, education, and family planning, which are the social policy elements the World Bank and IMF have integrated into their poverty reduction policies. Cammack argues that this has the effect of creating a "global proletariat on a wage of two dollars a day, with a reserve army of labour acting as a disciplinary force" (Cammack, 2004, p.192). This in effect results in the systematic entrenchment of neoliberalism by publicizing itself as good for people, while concealing the fact that it is accumulation by dispossession. This will be reflected through the narratives of my grassroots respondents in Chapter Six.

reaffirms the World Bank's belief that "development is best promoted by neoliberal policies" (p. 1348), while acknowledging the social justice dimensions of development and the need to integrate social policy with macroeconomic policy. However, the World Bank and the IMF see this integration as a technical exercise in which the need for social policy is merely *added* to the existing macroeconomic framework rather than interrogating the balance of power, which underpins these policies. What this exemplifies is that the growth led approach suits the needs of the countries that have the greatest power within the IMF and World Bank. Since the MDGs are enmeshed within a growth based development paradigm which has forced them to deemphasize the human 'capabilities' they were positioned to promote, it is unsurprising that substantive equality has not been achieved in the Guyanese context, or elsewhere in the world, where there has been a high level of achievement on all three indicators of MDG3. This will be explored further in Chapter Six.

Human Rights, the MDGs, and their Achievement

As previously noted, each of the MDGs is linked to the Human Development framework and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. MDG3 is linked specifically to Article 2 and Article 26(1) of the Declaration (see Appendix A, Table A1), the former of which outlines each person's entitlement "to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration [of Human Rights], without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status" (United Nations, 2013), and the latter to the right to education. Therefore in relation to Article 2, gender equality is a human right in itself. However, through its indicators, MDG3 only goes as far as attempting to ensure women and girls' equal access to education, women's market share in non-agricultural employment as well as women's representation in political life which can hardly account for all of the rights covered within the Universal Declaration.

Returning to the education target and indicator of MDG3 which links to article 26(1) of the Declaration, entitling each person to the right to an education, this right must be understood as such for its intrinsic value. Education should have the effect of promoting personal and collective empowerment, however, increasing the representation of girls and women in education as a target and indicator of MDG3 does not address the content of the education provided. What the curriculum is and is not teaching boys and girls about themselves and each other can *foster* gender inequality irrespective of how laudable the goal of achieving gender parity may be. Gender stereotyping in the curriculum typically portrays girls as “passive, modest, and shy” and boys as “assertive, brave, and ambitious” (Kabeer, 2005b, p. 17), and often depicts girls and boys participating in activities appropriate for their respective genders. Furthermore, curriculum about the effects of domestic violence, or healthy relationships based on equality are usually absent. These inclusions and omissions help to frame how boys and girls see themselves by reinforcing traditional conceptions of gender norms. Moreover, it delimits their future opportunities, and the prospect of achieving *de facto* gender equality, which links back to Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Additionally, education as a *right* must also be discerned from its instrumental value. As discussed earlier, even the Task Force on Education and Gender Equality has urged the empowerment of women in order to draw on their labour for the good of society, either through their unremunerated care work, or as a pool of (cheap) labour (UNMP, 2005, p.4). Moreover, numerous studies show that educating women promotes a number of social and health benefits which include not only productivity in the home translating to greater health of families and children, and children’s human capital, but also labour market productivity which promotes economic growth, albeit, without successfully reducing the gender gap in pay or broader social equality (Becker, 1997; Hill & King, 1995; Kabeer, 2005b). Therefore, the World Bank and IMF

have promoted 'gender equality' by improving women's equal access to education and labour markets within their policy frameworks, however not for the purpose of ensuring women's equal rights under the human rights Declaration. Rather, women's labour is understood as a resource that has not yet been fully tapped in order to facilitate growth, thus barriers delimiting the full potential of women's labour must be eliminated (Berg & Qureshi, 2005; World Bank, 2000). It is no surprise therefore, that representation in education and non-agricultural employment have been included as indicators within the MDGs under the current economic paradigm, as women's increased productivity can be exploited for the betterment of society, without challenging the structures which put these additional burdens on women in the first place. Andaiye, a Guyanese activist sums this up eloquently:

Capital is based on extracting surplus value from women's unwaged and low-waged labour. They want us in "economic development" so we do two jobs instead of one, or three job instead of two- so we work harder. So if our politics are about "increasing women's participation in economic development" or mainstreaming women into economic plans designed by the IMF, we're sometimes doing their work of getting women to work harder under the pretext that we're helping them to be liberated (As cited in Scott, 2004, p. 210).

However, even where women have achieved parity in education, this has not systematically translated to increased or better employment opportunities (Antrobus, 2006; Hill & King, 1995). Women remain the largest class of unemployed and underemployed workers globally, and still predominate in the lowest paid sectors of the global economy (Hill & King, 1995). Therefore, as technocratic goals, the indicators of MDG3, which promote the achievement of gender parity in education as well as increasing women's representation in non-agricultural employment, cannot sufficiently address subtle mechanisms of discrimination that perpetuate inequality (Andaiye, 2003). Moreover, while increasing women's representation in parliaments (the third indicator of MDG3) should provide a space from which to begin bringing women's issues to the table in order to promote human rights and bring about *de facto* empowerment and equality, women in power

often get there through alignment with more conservative values espoused by male party leaders. Those who enter the ranks of parliament are often voted in, or promoted on the basis of their affiliation with the politics of the given party, which, worldwide, are still largely male biased (Andaiye, 2003; Antrobus, 2005). Furthermore, Kabeer (2005b) notes that women who achieve parliamentary status, do not emanate out of poor, working class backgrounds, but rather constitute members of the elite and wealthy, and therefore will be unlikely to understand the challenges facing the poor, let alone promote policies which will be truly empowering to poor women. As a result, the target and three indicators of MDG3 alone can hardly be said to account for, or assist in facilitating the achievement of, all of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, nor gender equality in itself.

Moreover, one of the most controversial political elements excluded from the MDGs, which is also not explicitly outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is that of securing women's sexual and reproductive rights. The exclusion of a Goal seeking to secure sexual and reproductive rights, as well as another seeking to end domestic violence, from the MDGs "symbolizes both the lack of sincerity on the part of the majority that voted on them, and the struggle that lies ahead for anyone who seriously seeks equality, equity and empowerment for women" according to Antrobus (2005, p. 40). The exclusion of sexual and reproductive rights is argued to have been facilitated by the continuing spread of neoliberalism as a result of the power wielded by large, conservative economies such as the USA, which through their substantial pull in the World Bank and IMF, have heavy influence over global social policy (Antrobus, 2006; Saith, 2006). Johnsson-Latham (2004) asserts that agreement on a global set of Development Goals through the MDGs was only ascertained through the removal of controversial goals such as women's reproductive health, which would include unrestricted access to contraceptives and safe abortions, issues non-negotiable to countries such as the U.S., the Vatican and a number of

Muslim countries. However, although the right to sexual and reproductive health is not enshrined in the International Declaration of Human Rights, CEDAW and the BPFA have included it within their priorities for action, and the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) which is a global organization providing reproductive health services in 180 countries mapped their own charter on sexual and reproductive rights grounded in the Declaration. The IPPF charter urges that:

The right to sexual and reproductive health implies that people are able to enjoy mutually satisfying and safe relationships free from coercion or violence and without fear of infection or pregnancy and they are able to regulate their fertility without adverse or dangerous consequences (IPPF, 2003, p. 1).

This is important because both men and women should be able to enjoy freedom from external regulation of their bodies and sexuality. Moreover it is important for women to be able to control the timing and number of their pregnancies as women shoulder most of the burden of childcare. Preventing women from being able to choose about the timing and planning of their own families, in addition to the risk of domestic violence, puts them at additional risk of poverty and precariousness which undermines their right “to life, liberty and security” (United Nations, 2013, n.p.) as enshrined in article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The omission of these two issues in MDG3 highlights the cursory and perhaps superficial way in which women’s rights (as not divorced from human rights) have been integrated into the MDGs. Thus, although the indicators outlined in MDG3 are important stand alone goals, as far as gender equality and women’s empowerment are concerned, they are simplistic technocratic indicators which are insufficient for achieving gender justice and promoting human rights without a deeper analysis, and application, of policies which address other structural inequalities.

Moreover, because of various content exclusions, such as those relating to MDG3 just described, in addition to the fact that citizens and southern Civil Society Organizations were not

included in the design of the MDGs, there appears to be little identification with the Goals amongst stakeholders and local organizations on the ground. While no studies have looked directly at the adoption of MDG3 by grassroots citizens and civil society organization, some of the limited research which has examined the uptake of the MDGs in local settings (see: McDonnell, 2003; Nelson, 2007), indicates that people have not rallied around the Goals, nor has the language of the MDGs been included in the publications and policy documents of local organizations. And yet, since the MDGs were designed to link back to the Human Development framework as well as to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, such identification has been perceived as necessary for achieving the MDGs and for having them validly be seen as a platform from which people can advocate for human rights (only one of them being gender equality). It has been argued explicitly and implicitly by scholars (Nelson, 2007; Saith, 2006;), international organizations (MDGIF, 2013; OECD, 2007; OHCHR, 2013) and through various reports and conferences taking up the issue of MDG achievement (United Nations, 2012; UNDP, 2003; United Nations Secretary General, 2009), that public awareness of the MDGs plays a crucial role in engaging citizens to keep governments accountable to meeting the Goals. This comes back to the need for ordinary citizens to see value in, and identify with the Goals in order to press local, national, and donor governments to meet them. However, the tenuous connection between human rights and the MDGs is insufficient to promote meaningful mobilization around the Goals.

In a content analysis of publications, Nelson (2007) found that out of 20 prominent southern NGOs, 11 mentioned human rights, but only four made any mention of the MDGs, further highlighting the disconnect between the purported human rights dimension of the MDGs, as well as the lack of uptake of the Goals by civil society organizations and NGOs. Conversely, out of 20 international NGOs, Nelson found that 18 prominently mentioned the MDGs, and only ten mentioned human rights, leading him to contend that “the logic and politics of the MDGs

have much more in common with donor pledging than with human rights” (p. 2045).

Furthermore, according to McDonnell (2003) no more than ten per cent of the population of Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member countries (explained earlier) are aware of the MDGs. And while Saith (2006), reported that according to the NCDO (Dutch National Committee for International Cooperation and Sustainable Development) in 2005, up to 39% of the Dutch population knew about the MDGs, of that 39%, 80% favoured more aid for the achievement of the MDGs, but 46% were not in favour of reducing trade barriers, opting for the protection of their own economy instead (NCDO, 2005 as cited in Saith 2006, p. 1196). This points to two issues: awareness of the MDGs is limited in the Netherlands (a wealthy donor country where the MDGs *have* been integrated into their international development policy); and public opinion of the approach to the MDGs is still entrenched in a ‘development as charity’ discourse the MDGs have attempted to veer away from. Support for aid increases, but opposition to interventions, which might lead to redistribution and transformation necessary for a real re-evaluation of global priorities, serves to undermine the transformatory potential of the MDGs.

Conclusion

The MDGs continue to be sold to the global population as the best way to move forward on eradicating poverty, and promoting the capabilities of Human Development and human rights, which include women’s empowerment and gender equality. Because the existing macroeconomic framework is not designed to promote equality and social justice, but rather gives primacy to growth-based models of development, substantive achievement on the political issues that underpin the MDGs appears to be unlikely. Because of this orientation, the MDG framework has reduced the Goal seeking to empower women to measurable indicators which precludes discussions of power and structures of subordination. As a result, the human rights aspects of MDG3 are simultaneously undermined to large extent, and because thus far there appears to have

been limited identification with the Goals by ordinary citizens, framing the MDGs as a human rights platform for the poor and marginalized becomes simple rhetoric. These issues are particularly relevant in the context of Guyana where progress has long been made on most of the MDG3 indicators, but where poverty continues to exist in both intensity and scope in some of the highest levels in the Western Hemisphere (as measured by both economic, and multidimensional poverty scales) (United Nations, 2011). Antrobus (2006) urges that gender equality and women's empowerment are fundamentally political issues and cannot, and will not be addressed by technical interventions, which the MDGs can measure. "No matter how good the indicators, no matter how accurate the statistics, nothing can be achieved without political will. A women's movement with an analysis of power and a set of carefully thought-out strategies is essential to the achievement of the MDGs" (Antrobus, 2006, p.47). Such an analysis is sadly and sorely lacking. The following chapter will help to situate these critiques in the Guyanese context.

Chapter 3: Socio-historical Context of Poverty and Inequality in Guyana

As previously discussed, a large body of literature suggests that poverty and gender inequality are not predicated upon a lack of economic growth, or modernization, rather, they result from unequal power relations. These relationships are played out in the domestic and public spheres, and stem from historical processes that continue to have a lasting effect on any given society. As is the case in the broader Anglophone Caribbean, in Guyana, poverty and inequality continue to be enmeshed within, and mediated by, the aftermath of the colonial experience, in addition to economic and political interventions by foreign actors. As noted in the previous chapter, gender is only one marker upon which inequality is predicated, and in Guyana's ethnically plural society, it is important to acknowledge the broader context in which gender relations are played out, and that women's experiences with inequality have not been homogeneous. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to shed light on the political economy of poverty and inequality in Guyana in order to provide an understanding of who is poor and marginalized in Guyana and urban Georgetown where the study is located, and what socio-historical processes have created the social, political and geographic *status quo*.

I provide a brief country overview, and examine the inception of Guyana as a society constructed through colonialism, slavery and indentureship while discussing the gendered impacts of these processes; the divisive racial politics instilled by colonial governments which continue to survive post-independence; the effects of neoliberal economic policies which saw poverty rates soar; and the history of women's integration into Guyana's national development, which produced some benefits for women, while drawing on their labour to move it forward. A socio-historical analysis of this nature will provide a base from which to understand the relevance of the MDGs for Guyanese women.

Overview

The Co-operative Republic of Guyana is located on the northern coast of South America bordering Venezuela to the west and Suriname and Brazil to the east. It is the only English speaking country on the continent and politically constitutes a part of the Anglophone Caribbean. As of 2011, Guyana had 756,000 inhabitants (International Organization for Migration, 2012), and is considered to be the ‘land of 6 peoples’²⁹ including Amerindians, Africans, Chinese, East Indians, Europeans and Portuguese (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 10) (see Table 2). In general, urban centers are inhabited by a mix of Indo and Afro-Guyanese, the rural coastal areas by Indo-Guyanese, and the interior regions by the original Amerindian population, segregations stemming from regional divisions that have colonial underpinnings (refer to Figure 1, Chapter One, and Table 2 this chapter).

Table 2: Percentage Distribution by Nationality Background/Ethnicity and Region Guyana 2002

Ethnicity/ Background	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Total
African/Black	0.07	0.88	2.91	17.21	2.27	3.47	0.27	0.09	0.03	3.01	30.21
Amerindian	2.01	1.07	0.28	0.70	0.14	0.27	0.98	1.02	2.30	0.39	9.14
Chinese	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.11	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.19
East Indian	0.05	3.14	8.98	15.51	4.03	11.31	0.21	0.03	0.01	0.17	43.45
Mixed	1.09	1.45	1.51	7.59	0.53	1.38	0.88	0.19	0.23	1.89	16.73
Portuguese	0.00	0.01	0.01	0.14	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.20
White	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.06
Other	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.01
Total %	3.23	6.56	13.72	41.31	6.98	16.47	2.34	1.34	2.58	5.47	100
Number	24,275	49,254	103,061	310,320	52,428	123,694	17,597	10,094	19,388	41,114	751,223

Source: Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007

²⁹ My understanding and use of the terms race and ethnicity throughout this thesis, is such that they are socially constructed phenomena that have been used to create hierarchies of power and privilege based upon arbitrary phenotypic characteristics, and have acquired meaning through “capitalist social relations of production, [and were] ideologically politically, culturally, [and] materially [created] through slavery, indenture, share cropping and wage labour, [and] under colonialism and imperialism” (Watson, 2001, p. 449). However the reference above refers to the Guyanese Governments conception of race as a biological trait, albeit one from which cultural practices and modes of behaviour flow.

Guyana's two largest ethnic groups who are of African and Indian descent, and are respectively descendants of the African slave trade and indentured labour regimes, comprise about three quarters of the population. The current government is the Indo-Guyanese supported People's Progressive Party (PPP), and much as was the case during the preceding 28 years of People's National Congress (PNC) rule primarily underpinned by Afro-Guyanese supporters, citizens of the non-ruling class and its race-based constituents feel unrepresented and marginalized by the party in power. These two groups which have been the main source of ethnic tensions exacerbated by ethnically backed political parties, discussed in greater detail later in this chapter, primarily intersect in Georgetown, Region 4 where this study is situated (see Table 2). As a result of the ethno-political conflict and the lack of economic opportunities existing in Guyana stemming from years of external interference in the social, political and economic fabric of the country, the low population level has been oscillating between a negative one percent growth rate and stagnation since the early 1980s (World Bank, 2013d). Rough estimates thus suggest that there is an equal, or higher number of Guyanese living in the diaspora than within the borders of Guyana (International Organization for Migration, 2012). Guyanese living in the diaspora primarily comprise the middle and upper educated classes which has left those with the fewest opportunities to negotiate their lives in a society nearly devoid of educated and skilled workers, and very few indigenous industries in which to find employment. City dwellers such as the large proportion inhabiting Georgetown have been particularly negatively impacted. High rates of violence, including ethnic violence, intersect with the integration of urban dwellers into the national vs. traditional economy. As a result the citizens of Georgetown are more dependent on formal means of subsistence than their rural counterparts, meaning that the poor, and poor women in particular are the hardest hit by high food prices, the lack of jobs, which are furthermore mediated by race relations, and the constant threat of violence. This level of

insecurity is a direct outcome of the socio-historical processes that have taken place in Guyana and will now be explored further.

The Early Colonial Period and Race Relations (1600-1834)

Beyond the displacement of people across continents to fulfill the needs of colonists, during the 15th and 16th centuries, the Dutch West India company established trading posts along the Berbice, Essequibo and Demerara rivers, and was the point at which the mixing, movement and exploitation of imported and local people began on the territory which is today considered Guyana. The indigenous Amerindian populations that existed in the coastal areas receded into the interior in order to avoid contact with the colonists who attempted to harness their labour, and instead slaves from the African slave trade were imported to Guyana to provide the labour necessary for production of various cash crops on the coastal plantations (Thompson, 1987). Due to the inhumane conditions to which the slaves were subjected, numerous slave revolts including the 1763 Berbice Slave Uprising weakened the control the Dutch had over the region, creating an opportune environment for the British, who had long established colonies in the Americas and other parts of the Caribbean, to take hold of the Dutch plantations in Berbice, Demerara and Essequibo by 1814. By 1831 the Dutch officially ceded the territory they had occupied to the British, which then became British Guiana (Thompson, 1987).

Once slavery was abolished throughout the British Empire in 1834, the ruling class of British planters maintained control of their plantations and sought to continue earning profits on the estates using the labour of freed African slaves (Rodney, 1981). However, due to negligible wages and scarcely improved conditions on the plantations, extended periods of strike ensued on the part of the African labourers resulting in the planters' employment of indentured servants from Portugal, China and primarily India. Many of the retrenched ex-slaves were forced into urban and hinterland areas in an effort to find employment while indentured labourers maintained

their dwellings on or near the plantations. This created a geographical division between the two dominant ethnic groups with Africans predominantly occupying villages and urban areas such as Georgetown, and Indians inhabiting regions closer to the plantations where many were awarded land grants in order for the plantocracy to maintain access to a cheap labour supply once the indentureship period had concluded (Rodney, 1981). Moreover, the diminished presence of Amerindians in the coastal regions caused them to be more or less excluded from the coastal political economy of the estates (and later of the contemporary nation-state). These geographical divisions were part of the plantocracy's divide and rule ideology, and simultaneously instilled mistrust between the populations as no common ground was purposely established between the groups in order to prevent a united revolt. These regional segregations still hold true into the present day, with the exception of Georgetown, the epicenter of economic activity, where numerous Indians began migrating for work and to establish businesses, particularly post-independence.

Impacts of Slavery and Indentureship on Gender Relations

Slavery and Indentureship (1616-1917)

The colonial experience also had differentiated impacts upon men and women of different ethnic and class backgrounds during this period. While a full accounting is not possible in the limited space available, broad outlines, particularly relating to the most marginalized classes of society will be revealed. Colonial governments drew on or altered gender roles and relations to reap the greatest amount of economic benefit from various labour regimes, while also establishing "appropriate" gender, race and class relationships. For example, during the early period of slavery, women largely performed the same tasks as men when engaged in field labour (Miot, 1995, p. 156; Brereton, 2002, p. 133). This operated to defeminize black women, in an era that perceived elite women to be fragile and in need of constant male protection, helping to justify the brutal experience to which estate owners had subjected slave women. In an effort to resist this

typecast, where possible (i.e. in cases where slaves were provided with a plot of land for their own subsistence), black women asserted their femininity by playing up feminine characteristics of the dominant white class at the time, which included the procurement of body adornments, engaging in market activities such as higgling, and entering into relationships with white men who in a number of cases gave their children their names and title to land and property (Beckles, 1999, p. 11).

Black feminine identity began to be acknowledged during the amelioration period, the last phase of slavery, due to the difficulty of acquiring new slaves from the transatlantic slave trade as a result of the strengthening of the anti-slavery movement. The dissolution of the representation of the defeminized female slave in favour of the black woman adhering to traditional European gender roles including motherhood and domesticity, was therefore advanced for the reproduction of the slave based economy. While these shifting gender roles assisted women in improving their own marginal status, they simultaneously functioned to reinforce and reproduce "masculinist class and race rule" (Beckles, 1999, p. 11). However, if one benefit could be salvaged from the deplorable experience of enslavement, Barrow (1998) contends that "it did create a remarkable level of gender equality among the slaves," which, she argues, was part of the groundwork necessary for Caribbean women's contemporary level of "economic autonomy" (p. xiv).

In terms of indentured labour regimes predominantly occupied by workers of Indian descent, Indian women, who were bound by more traditional gender roles than their African counterparts, were primarily brought over to the Caribbean in order to increase the potential bride pool to establish a more permanent source of male labour on the plantations and reduce the cost of repatriation. However, there were insufficient domestically based employment opportunities through which Indian women could conform to European norms of the sexual division of labour and remain in the private sphere (Shepherd, 2002; Reddock, 1987). As a result, Indian women

played an important role in the agricultural sector, primarily on the sugar estates. Landholders contracted them for field labour paying them 90% of the pay men received for the same work (Reddock, 1987, Shepherd, 2002; Peake & Trotz, 1999).

Low-paying employment opportunities limited to agriculture and domestic work prevented Indian women from experiencing much independent upward mobility (Shepherd, 2002). However, because Indian women existed in lower numbers than their male counterparts across the Caribbean, among the Hindu majority, it was difficult for men to adhere to marriages within their own caste thus providing some women the opportunity to marry upward (Peake & Trotz, 1999). Furthermore, family structure was not limited to the nuclear family during this period and the presence of “a single woman with or without a child, single women being visited by several men sequentially (the visiting union), woman with or without child passing through single male households, polyandrous household, a few polygamous ones and, finally, the typical monogamous household” (Mohapatra 1995, p. 244 as cited in Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 43) were all part of the spectrum of domestic life, and provided Indian women with an unprecedented level of control over their social and sexual lives. Because of the wage disparity however, Indian women were for the most part dependent on men, though in many cases they were able to save enough money to remit home, or for the cost of repatriation illustrating their mediated level of agency (Peake & Trotz, 1992; Reddock, 1987; Shepherd, 2002).

However, women’s social and sexual freedom soon became a threat to the patriarchal social order of both the European colonial context and traditional Indian society, itself mediated by British colonialism at that time (Srinivasan, 2012). As a result of Indian women’s scarcity and their ability to change partners if their living situation was no longer acceptable, a series of laws surrounding infidelity were passed to protect men’s ability to control their wives (Reddock, 1987). This legislation is believed to have concomitantly increased rates of violence against women in the colonies (Peake & Trotz, 1999; Reddock, 1987).

Changes in land-holding practices and reductions in land prices, caused free Indian plantation laboring communities to move beyond the plantations where they developed small family based rice plots in order to supplement the meagre wages of the plantations (Peake & Trotz, 1999). This move, in addition to technological advances in sugar production, caused Indian women to be squeezed out of the plantation labour force, and on to the rice paddies of the domestic sphere. This caused a shift in how Indian women were perceived, which coincided with the infidelity laws seeking to control women's bodies and autonomy. While in many cases Indian women had been called "loose and immoral", they were now being considered "tradition bound" and "domestic" (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 45), a shift perpetuated by the plantocracy's reduced need for women's labour, and an ideological desire to relegate women to the domestic sphere.

The intersection of patriarchy and colonial capitalism mediated women's experiences during the period of slavery and indentureship, in ways that continue to influence contemporary social relations and women's position in Guyana and the broader Caribbean. These systems of control produced outcomes that simultaneously increased and delimited women's agency, and have influenced the social and economic opportunities available to men and women of different class and race backgrounds. As a result, the opportunities and barriers that Guyanese women currently face have links, which reach as far back as the early colonial period.

Post-indentureship (1917-1960)

During the period following indentureship which ended in 1917, the declining state of the sugar industry continued to reduce its labour demands and European policy makers persisted with attempts to impose European gender norms upon the populations of the colonies for ideological and socioeconomic reasons; "housewifization" continued to occur, while men were being pushed to play the role of husband/head of household (Brereton, 2002, p.136). As a result of the migration patterns stemming from the changes in land-holding practices previously mentioned, Indian families were found predominantly in rural areas, while Afro-Caribbean men and women

were concentrated in urban centers, which mediated the economic and social activities of each group (Barrow, 1998; Peake & Trotz, 1999). As women's participation in the agricultural sector further declined, their roles in peasant production simultaneously increased and their economic activities became concentrated in enterprises such as "family farms, marketing, domestic production of charcoal, food and drink and livestock raising" in the rural areas, while urban women tended to engage in occupations such as "domestic service, seamstressing [and] vending" (Brereton, 2002, p.135-136). This range of occupations, while appearing varied, was in fact much narrower and less lucrative for women than their male counterparts who also had the advantage of participating in professional, skilled and supervisory occupations to which women had virtually no access (Shepherd, 2002). By 1960, only 23% of women in Guyana were formally employed, indicating the inability of the labour markets to absorb displaced female agricultural workers (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p.47).

There was also a divide in occupations by race, in which Indian women, as a result of more stringent gender roles being imposed upon their lives, were confined to the lowest paid occupations available and were underrepresented in the commercial and skilled sectors (Shepherd, 2002). The decrease in participation by women in agriculture had a disproportionate social and economic effect on Indian women. They were overrepresented in family peasant production, while the few who did engage in labour markets, participated in activities such as selling milk and vegetables (Barrow, 1998; Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 47). This simultaneously resulted in the reinforcement of women's traditional roles in addition to their unpaid contributions in peasant production, solidifying the male breadwinner/female housewife dichotomy for Indo-Caribbean women. Many successful family businesses depended on these activities, for which many Indo-Guyanese would become known (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 47).

The European gendered norms to which these behaviours adhered, reflected the analogous patriarchal system of traditional Indian society. Afro-Caribbean communities, however, did not and could not negotiate the contradictions inherent in the European gendered norms of “responsible manhood” which intersected with “high unemployment, dehumanizing poverty and persistent white male promiscuity with black women” (Barrow, 1998, p. xv). Furthermore, by the late 1920s, Afro-Caribbean women were beginning to join men in the migratory processes, through which women would work in other Caribbean cities sending home remittances. This signalled the beginning of women’s role in the transnational family network (Barrow, 1998), and resulted in loose, and often shifting family structures which comprised ‘flexible extraresidential unions’, children born out of wedlock and ‘child shifting’ whereby child rearing was distributed amongst kin of more economically secure households, (Barrow, 1999, p.153). These activities further contributed to the dissolution of the construction of the male breadwinner/head of household characterization particularly for Afro-Caribbean families. Therefore, while Indo-Caribbean women’s upward mobility was associated with favourable marriage opportunities and in some cases independent retailing activities in urban areas, for Afro-Caribbean women, social mobility was associated with travel related economic opportunities, as well as opportunities in the civil service as a result of their greater access to formal education and access to jobs in urban areas.

As Peake and Trotz (1999) have argued, this differential access to resources along lines of gender and race concomitantly “helped consolidate the production of racialised groups and identities,” (p.47) which have had effects lasting into the present day. Furthermore, practices and norms ascribed along lines of race and gender have resulted in continued occupational segmentation even in Georgetown where the population is mixed. This is particularly true for the middle and upper classes as Afro-Guyanese women are more highly visible in professional

occupations (albeit most often in pink collar jobs), while Indo-Guyanese women are overrepresented as clerks and part-owners of family run businesses. However, in the poorest classes of urban Guyanese society, women of all ethnic backgrounds predominantly occupy the informal sector which appears to indicate that for them class is a stronger predictor of employment opportunities than race. However, family relations underpinned by ethnicity may differentially mediate the capacity of women from varying ethnic backgrounds to make decisions in the home and about their sexual and reproductive choices.

Gaining 1966 Independence

The seeds of the anti-colonial Nationalist movement in British Guyana were sown in response to the oppression of all ethnic groupings (Indian, African, Chinese and Portuguese) who were both socially and politically marginalized by the white British ruling class (Hintzen, 2004, p. 10). This incited the first instances of contemporary merging and diverging of Indo and Afro-Guyanese particularly in relation to anti-colonial struggle and post-colonial political formation. The Amerindian populations were side-lined from the movement due to their exclusion from the coastal political economy, which would later prove to see their needs go unrecognized, relegating them to the most marginalized ethnic class within the country (Rodney, 1982, p. 31).

The Nationalist movement was spurred by an Indian intellectual, Cheddi Jagan, along with numerous other high profile Guyanese intellectuals who organized with people across race and class uniting the dominant and minority groups for a time with relative success. The movement gained strength in the post-war era leading into the Cold war, and Hintzen (2004) argues that because white colonial power was tied to the colonial capitalist economy, the movement took on an anti-capitalist sentiment. Once the British amended the constitution and extended suffrage to all citizens, by 1950, the movement became an official party called the People's Progressive Party (PPP), and was organized around the notion of an inclusive and united Creole identity across race

and class (Hintzen, 2004, p 12). According to Hintzen however, this identity was based on a false unity which, while outwardly addressing class as part of their socialist rhetoric, did not challenge the racial hierarchies instilled by the British colonists which were directly related to class status. The race-class hierarchy established by the British placed the Portuguese and Chinese below the British ruling class, followed by African Creoles and Indians which resulted in an “entanglement of color with cultural and economic capital” (Hintzen, 2004, p.109). Hintzen also notes that “Nationalism was forged in the crucible of the cross-racial uniformity of this everyday experience of white capitalist exploitation and repression. But as a political phenomenon, Guyanese nationalism left intact and uncontested the social, cultural, and even economic entanglements of difference with race” (p. 113).

In 1953, the PPP was elected into government, but the ideological opposition to capitalism would not be enough to sustain the party’s unity. The ultimate result was a split in the party in 1955, due to a power struggle between Jagan and his Afro-Guyanese counterpart Forbes Burnham. Burnham vied for the leadership of the PPP, but ultimately lost, causing him to leave the party, taking his primarily middle and lower class Afro-Guyanese supporters with him to create the People’s National Congress (PNC) (Hintzen, 2004, p.114). This was precipitated by the perception that the Indian majority had taken control over of the state to further their own interests. Britain agreed to hold another set of elections out of growing concern over the PPPs strong communist rhetoric, in the hope that the remaining Creole social order would merge against the now predominantly Indian faction of the nationalist movement that constituted the PPP (Hintzen, 2004, p.114). However, due to Guyana’s Indian majority, the PPP remained in office for an additional two terms until 1964, which caused a spate of riots and constant threat of racially based violence around and between the election periods (Hintzen, 2004, p.114). With growing disillusionment through what had become Apanjihit, or race based voting, Burnham forged an alliance with the United Force which was composed of a Portuguese and Chinese

national capitalist elite. Burnham's party was outwardly socialist, but as a result of its coalition with the minority of capitalist elites, a PNC-United Force coalition government would be far less economically threatening to the U.S. and Great Britain during the Cold War period than the communist oriented PPP (Garner, 2008). This caused the British to intervene, changing the First-Past-the-Post voting system to one of proportional representation, which would help the PNC-United Force secure the election in 1964 (Garner, 2008, p. 147). With the PNC and the Creole elite in place, the British granted what would then become Guyana independence in 1966 (Hintzen, 2004, p.115).

Because the race-class hierarchy instilled by the colonists was not sufficiently addressed and dealt with during the Nationalist struggle, the British government was able to harness the resulting tensions to their advantage in order to help instate an independent government which poised itself as adhering to capitalistic principles and ideology during one of the tensest periods of the Cold War. As a result, instead of channelling attention toward unity and national development, politicians and citizens remained embroiled in a battle over representation, which only exacerbated racial and class divisions, and increased the insecurity of the poorest and most marginalized segments of society. This trend continued into the post-independence period and still looms high into the present day.

Post-independence PNC lead Co-operative Socialism (1967-1978)

By 1970 there was a sharp reversal of liberalization policies as opposition from the both the Indian and Black lower classes forced the PNC to reorient their politics to a more working class friendly ideology, which saw the introduction of a campaign of "national economic self-sufficiency in the Feed, Clothe, and House Ourselves program aimed at weaning the country's economy away from dependence on foreign imports" (Hintzen, 2004, p.17). The PNC

simultaneously severed ties with the British, declaring itself the Co-operative Socialist Republic of Guyana (Hintzen, 2004, p.17).

The rhetoric of Co-operative socialism served to increase the PNCs control over resources available to the state, and operated to increase its power over the population. While the nationalization process saw the expansion of the state bureaucracy, resources and opportunities were distributed to those with government allegiances and along racial lines, while broad based support for the agricultural sector was reduced. This alienated the Indo-Guyanese who predominated the agricultural sector, and increased the perception that the PNC was a party sympathetic to the interests of the Afro-Guyanese (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p.55)

Due to the state structure and economic mismanagement of the Burnham regime, a foreign debt crisis precipitated beginning in the 1970s. This was a result of the initial boom in export prices of sugar, rice and bauxite on which the economy depended coming to a sudden end, and the country's reduced ability to supply market demand for those primary commodities (Thomas, 1982; Bartilow, 1997). When inflation spiralled out of control and a widening gap in government deficits ensued, the Burnham government was forced to implement a number of austerity measures after negotiating a joint IMF and World Bank cash and industrial infrastructure loan (Bartilow, 1997, p. 112). Knowing that the PPP or WPA would not uphold the IMF conditionalities attached to it if the PNC fell from power, the PNC government was told to deal with "some internal political uncertainties" (Bartilow, 1997, p.110), before the balance of payments program and financial and infrastructure investments would be made. This caused the PNC to hold a referendum to dissolve the Constitution for the key objective of eliminating elections which would threaten the PNCs supremacy. By holding the referendum on extremely short notice on July 10, 1978, and was widely believed to be rigged (Scott, 2004; Bartilow, 1987), the IMF and World Bank assisted the PNC in securing the leadership of Guyana for almost 30 years (Bartilow, 1997, p. 108-109; Garner, 2008).

Despite austerity measures, the balance of payments crisis was still looming high several years later, which worsened the already dismal social and economic conditions within the country. Furthermore, the intimidation and oppression of the Indo-Guyanese, caused by the Afro-Guyanese backed PNC's authoritarian hold on power, resulted in more entrenched mistrust and animosity between the two dominant racial groups. This has led Guyanese public intellectuals such as Thomas (1982) to develop a scathing criticism of the World Bank-IMF group's irresponsible efforts to promote global capitalism not only through its SAPs and conditionality based infrastructure projects, but through the way that they intervened in local political processes which resulted in the repression of democracy.

This simultaneously crushed opportunities for political representation by popular working class movements such as the Working People's Alliance (WPA) led by Afro-Guyanese Walter Rodney who was outwardly critical of the Burnham lead PNC regime. The WPA had a significant following and during that period had unparalleled success in unifying its followers across racial lines, thus opportunities for unity and pro-poor policies were marred, because of the interference of external actors in Guyana's economic and political processes in the name of capitalism, and what were ostensibly neoliberal economic policies. Furthermore, important members of the WPA who were part of, or close with, the leadership of the party included a number of the founding members of Red Thread (Scott, 2004). If the WPA had been able to fairly compete and win the elections during this period, the historical outcomes for women and the working class post 1978 may have been drastically different due to the feminist priorities of the women involved in the WPA (although none of the members would term it as such), and the WPA's Marxist ideology and strong connections with other socialist countries such as Cuba and Grenada (Scott, 2004).

Co-operative Socialism and IFI Conditionality (1978-1990s):
Women's Role in Feeding the Nation

The macro-economic interventions that took place in Guyana during the 1970s and 1980s as part of the IMF- World Bank loan and infrastructure projects (the latter of which never materialized), resulted in the further restriction of government outputs in the social sector, and significant pressure being placed on the government to divest from state enterprises and mimic the capitalist market model, which was to spur increased incomes through economic growth. However, in the immediate aftermath of the IMF-World Bank interventions in Guyana, there were broad reductions in well being rather than widespread improvements, a situation not uncharacteristic of other countries where neoliberal policies were implemented through SAPs. Furthermore, with the politically motivated assassination of one of the founding members of the WPA, Walter Rodney in 1981, the Guyanese people were left disillusioned and nearing a state of hopelessness regarding the prospect of substantive change. The social and economic situation continued to worsen throughout the 1980s and alongside labour unions, the WPA and PPP continued to stage protests against the authoritarian regime (Scott, 2004)

The period between 1980 and 1990 was characterized by a drop in GDP by 29% which resulted in an increase in the number of people living in poverty from 26% to 43% of the population (Gafar, 1996, p. 43). Gafar has attributed this increase to the inward looking state policies of the Burnham administration, but he fails to add that this period was directly preceded by another IMF-World Bank agreement from 1978, which robbed the Guyanese people of whatever limited social safety net was still in place (Thomas, 1982). The intersection of IMF conditionalities and the corruption inherent in the Burnham lead PNC regime resulted in “growing disinvestment in the social services; a virtual collapse of public utilities; high unemployment; scarcities of basic necessities; and rising inflation levels” (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 55). The effects that these outcomes and events had on the population included a lack of

access to jobs, greater difficulty in the provisioning of electricity and water, higher stress and burden to clothe and house families, and increased levels of hunger, malnutrition and illness.

The rhetoric of socialism with the intersection of austerity measures had the effect of tying women's emancipation to their role as caretakers of both the home and the state. In 1984, the Vice President of the women's arm of the PNC, the Women's Revolutionary Socialist Movement (WRSM) stated that "Guyanese women do not see their liberation in isolation from the liberation of their country" (as cited in Garner, 2008, p. 185), and according to Garner (2008) the key message promoted by the *Guyana Chronicle* newspaper between 1979 and 1984 was that "a woman's mission [was] to feed the nation" (p. 184). The valorization of women's care work during this period had direct links to the PNCs 'self sufficiency policy' (Garner, 2008), which stemmed out of the government's inability to meet its foreign debt obligations because by 1982 the state was nearly bankrupt and on the verge of economic collapse (Spinner, 1984, p. 199). In order to keep up with its debt repayments, the PNC government cut more public sector jobs and curtailed or banned a number of key commodities including flour, cooking oil, salt, split peas and chick peas which it could no longer afford to import (Spinner, 1984, p. 202). 75% of the country's revenue was now needed to service the country's GYD\$4 billion debt (Spinner, 1984, p. 200). Food bans and restrictions, and domestic food shortages resulting from earlier PNC-U.S. negotiations which failed to direct funds for infrastructure to the agricultural sector³⁰, the altering of consumption patterns by not only changing what they consumed, but how much they consumed (Garner, 2008). This was cloaked in the socialist and patriotic trope of emancipation

³⁰ During the late 1960's and early 1970's the U.S. experienced food surpluses, and were selling many primary commodities on foreign markets. As a result, investment in infrastructure for agriculture would have boosted Guyana's ability to compete in foreign markets, which would have eaten into the market share the U.S. was staking a claim in. This caused the U.S. to place conditions on infrastructure loans to Guyana which directed the PNC to use them elsewhere. The alternative projects also employed mainly Afro-Guyanese who were more likely to be sympathetic to the PNC. This tactic helped to reinforce the Government's support base, which helped them maintain their hold on power (Ishmael, 2010).

from “external dependence on other people’s food and products” (Garner, 2008, p.184). Despite its alignment with the Burnham regime, the U.S. State Department’s own assessment of the situation indicated that 50% of the population was living in extreme poverty during this period (Spinner, 1984, p.199), and the shortages of basic drugs, electricity and food including almost complete lack of access to milk were posing great risk to the wellbeing of citizens. Malnutrition and hunger especially affected children and babies who comprised a large portion of the population (p. 202).

Since women disproportionately shoulder the burden of feeding and caring for family members, it was women to whom the task of making ends meet was relegated. From survival and household management strategies which included engagement in illegal trading of banned or restricted goods, substituting restricted ingredients with those made locally (Garner, 2008), to reducing their own food intake to support their families (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p.59), women suffered an increased burden of time and labour, and put their own health at stake³¹. Some women even risked imprisonment by purchasing bootlegged goods, and others were thrown into the lock-up when many of the female members of the WPA organized a picket with poor women in protest of the food shortages (Scott, 2004). It was actually through this form of organizing that Red Thread was formed and began acting as a women’s self help group.

They wanted money and food. And Red Thread was an attempt to respond to that. It was women's self-help. We organized income generation, because that's what the women needed; we're talking about days when things were really bad. Because of the bannings, there were all kinds of shortages of foods and household goods that people considered essential. (Scott, 2004, p. 199).

These activities underscore how women’s labour, resourcefulness and self-sacrifice were used not only to buffer the negative effects of social service retrenchment, but also to fill the gap where the

³¹ Peake and Trotz (1999) cited that among countries within the Commonwealth Caribbean, between 1985-1990 infant mortality was the highest in Guyana, and that 24% of babies were being born with dangerously low birth weights, pointing to the same if not higher rates of maternal malnutrition.

state failed (but entreated women) to meet the basic needs of the majority of its citizens. The valorization of women's care work for the nation without recognition of its disproportionate burden on women's lives and health, left intact "the dominant representation of women as naturally and primarily mothers, subordinate partners and guardians of the domestic sphere" (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 58). As a result, the women of the WPA and later Red Thread did not link or align in any way with other women's organizations at that time as Andaiye states that "there was no sense in those days in which we women in the WPA organized ourselves consciously as women. We had no conception of autonomous organizing then" (Scott, 2004, p. 197). It was not until the women of the WPA separated from the party during its period of decline after Rodney's death, that women's empowerment became an important focal point for the women of the organization that would become Red Thread. This occurred as a result of growing recognition that even in a Marxist party, without full recognition and valuing of reproductive and care labour, gender equality would remain a figment (Scott, 2004).

Therefore, as alluded to earlier with the PNCs tying of women's emancipation to the liberation of the state, the early legislation provisioning equality for women came out of the PNCs socialist ideology of equal membership within the 'national family', rather than an active political movement to achieve women's rights. This legislation was enshrined in the 1980 Constitution, which accorded women "the same legal status in all spheres of economic, political and social life" (Garner, 2008, p.p. 182-183). This was followed by the creation of the Women's Affairs Bureau, which was mandated to ensure gender equality legislation was being upheld.

Due to economic necessity, and facilitated by the equality legislation, women began to seek out employment in sectors previously not permeated by women. However, the state's rhetoric around women's role as carers and feeders of the nation assisted in maintaining the structures and social environment that perpetuated inequality and relegated women to secondary status. Some

of the occupations which women entered into during the mid 1980s included manual labour, security, trades, trading, medicine, and politics (Garner, 2008, p.184), which to this day do not substantively protect women from sexual harassment, provide flexibility for care work, or create fair and equal opportunities for women to be promoted to the highest levels of power.

Furthermore, as far as women's representation in the political sphere was concerned, women's ability to make decisions in parliament was constrained by the ideology of the PNC, in addition to the leanings and views of their male protégés. This proved to be true across national parties (Peake, 1993), including the WPA (Scott, 2004), reinforcing the fact that *de facto* change cannot occur without addressing power differentials, irrespective of how well represented women are in the various spheres of public life. As a result, the combination of socialist rhetoric and neoliberal economic policies created the illusion of equality while exploiting women's labour even further.

However, the UN Decade for Women (1975-1986), and the PNCs signing of CEDAW in 1980, had the effect of intersecting positively with the ideology of Co-operative Socialism to provide women many legal rights they were previously denied (Peake & Trotz, 1999). These included equal pay for equal work, the legal recognition of both common law status and children born out of wedlock, enhanced property rights, and maternity and retirement benefits. By the mid 1990s medical termination of pregnancy was legalized, and protection from domestic violence was enshrined in the law through the 1996 Domestic Violence Act (Peake & Trotz, 1999, p. 57). These two political achievements were attained through significant inputs and advocacy from organizations such as Red Thread and Help and Shelter, and their importance reinforced through the priorities which came out of the BPFA. Numerous women from the global South including the women of Red Thread participated in BPFA and the creation of the priorities which through women's advocacy have been translated into laws in Guyana. However, in relation to all legislation existing in Guyana which might benefit women, since the period of Co-operative

Socialism until the present day, there has been a stark distinction between the signing of the laws and their practice.

Particularly where it concerns domestic violence, which to this day is considered by many to be a private issue rather than one requiring acknowledgement and due process within the legal system in Guyana, Garner (2008) asserts that “as real as the occupational advances made by women [were], it is clear that in terms of attitudinal change, there were still well defined areas of pre-revolutionary thought on women’s position in society” (p. 186). Beating a woman was seen as appropriate if it was deserved, as reflected through newspaper opinion pieces printed during the early 1980s (Garner, 2008, p.186), a sentiment which still holds true in many households. Moreover, according to a study conducted by Red Thread in 1998, 30% of 360 randomly sampled women from Georgetown had experienced domestic violence irrespective of domestic violence legislation (Red Thread, 1998b as cited in Pargass & Clarke, 2003, p.46). The exacerbated demands placed on women during the Burnham led PNC regime which caused conflict between their roles as caretakers of the family and nation and their newly established roles as men’s competitors in the labour market, may itself have been a factor in perpetuating high rates of domestic violence. Without challenging dominant notions about femininity and motherhood while promoting equality legislation during periods of hardship and high unemployment, men already living in a society plagued by race-based violence and political conflict³² may have found women’s greater independence emasculating and asserted their power over women physically in order to feel in control of some aspects of their lives.

³² Political violence and ethnic conflict are issues which themselves have had a tendency to increase violence against women. There is a large and body of literature around these issues in various regions of the world particularly relating to war and refugee situations. For examples of research pertaining to gender based violence in conflict zones not directly targeted by militarized violence which could be related back to the Guyanese situation see: Nikolic-Ristanovic, 1999; Albanese, 2001.

Furthermore, research on domestic violence cross-culturally indicates that as the economic situation of the household deteriorates, domestic violence increases (Heise, 1998), pointing to economic stress and threats to dominant conceptions of masculinity as potential causes of increased domestic violence rates. These suggestions are reinforced through research which indicates that domestic violence incidence appears to have increased during periods of structural adjustment (UNICEF; 1989; Barriteau, 1996b).

Moreover Peake & Trotz (1999) note that in spite of gender equality legislation in place, efforts to address the power relations delimiting women's social status within the public sphere due to responsibilities in the domestic domain were, and continue to be overlooked. Childcare, and other measures to ensure women's equal access to, and treatment in the labour market were neither implemented, nor formally tabled. Moreover, differential rates of labour market participation by race also existed and continue to exist for women. In 1992 50% of Afro-Guyanese as opposed to 29% of Indo-Guyanese women were employed in the labour market, and of these, 43.5% of Indo Guyanese vs. 31.6% of Afro-Guyanese engaged in occupations such as "vending, trading, or domestic work" (Garner, 2008, p. 188). Though part of this difference in representation reflects patterns of settlement discussed in previous sections, it also highlights differentiated access to formal employment, and points to the need for many women to engage in labour regimes adaptable to women's care work responsibilities. As a result, women comprise a large proportion of labourers in the informal economy. Therefore, although women's inclusion into male dominated domains was publicly lauded and framed as emancipation during this period, the structures perpetuating women's inequality along both lines of race and gender persisted and caused women's social position to remain intact. Furthermore, the high rates of unemployment that resulted out of economic stagnation made employment equality legislation inconsequential for most women, particularly those occupying the ranks of the poor. As a result the ideology of

equality under Co-operative socialism in Guyana may have brought attention to issues of inequality, but interventions to address its root causes were never employed.

After Burnham's sudden death in 1985, and with the country nearing economic collapse, his successor Desmond Hoyte openly declared the end of "nationalization as a tool of economic policy" (Gafar, 1996, p.43), with the introduction of the Economic Recovery Package (ERP). This program implemented in 1988, was a multilateral bridge loan with numerous market liberalizing conditionalities under the auspices of the IMF and World Bank, and has been attributed to the country's exceptional growth over the latter years of the 1990s (Gafar, 1996). While GDP finally began to grow after 1991, much of the earnings were still being directed towards the repayment of the national debt beyond what was forgiven (Peake & Trotz, 1999). This left the Guyanese people with no expansion of social services, relegating them to continued hardship.

Moreover, because the expansion of the private domain is at the heart of economic liberalization, the Guyanese state, irrespective of party, began to permanently entrench women's expanded social outputs previously appealed for on a temporary basis in order to help feed the nation. Thus, women's social and reproductive labour, and informal economic activities became part and parcel of the development plans of many countries in the global South (Barriteau, 1996). Activities in which women engaged, including the suitcase trade which comprised of women's informal and often illegal intraregional trading activities, even had immediately observable economic impacts:

Women [traveled] intra- and extra-regionally, circumventing language barriers, manipulating foreign currencies, battling with customs officers, confronting import regulations, and often undergoing physically stressful situations. By absorbing many of the costs and difficulties of importation, they [freed] larger businesses to employ their capital elsewhere. All these activities [kept] households and economies afloat, but they are not accounted for in development plans [as the] ability of women in developing

countries to survive is a factor that is exploited by policymakers (Barriteau, 1996a, p.148-149).

In the case of Guyana during the post-independence period, economic imperialism, facilitated through globalization and the SAPs heavily depended upon the formal and informal labour women had already been providing over the course of the previous two decades, which included many such activities (Garner, 2008). Guyanese women's extended social and reproductive labour therefore not only helped mitigate the effects of liberalization, but it laid the groundwork necessary to jump start the economy.

Furthermore, during the period of heightened economic growth in the late 1990s, not all segments of society benefited equally, nor can it be argued that poverty reduction was sustained. As previously mentioned, between 1992 and 1999 poverty dropped from a rate of 43.2% to 36.3% of the population, but by 2006 the poverty rate only decreased by another two tenths of a percentage point to 36.1% despite a continuously increasing GDP (Government of Guyana, 2011a). Moreover, Seguino (2000) argues that there is a positive correlation between gender wage inequality and growth. This inequality results in women occupying an inferior class position in which they are more likely to be "poor, malnourished, less educated, and overworked relative to men" (Seguino, 2000, p. 1215), yet this inequality in itself operates to spur growth because women do the same work men do for less (Molyneux, 2002; Rankin, 2002), irrespective of gender-wage equality legislation which, in practice is never systematically observed. It could thus be argued that the formal and informal labour of women who are disproportionately represented in poverty in urban Guyana (see Chapter One), has contributed to economic prosperity as reflected through the nation's GDP and has deepened the pockets of small segments of society without significantly improving women's condition or position.

According to Gafar, growth has also led to "glaring" and continuously "widening" income inequalities that have resulted in further racial and socio-political conflict and labour

segmentation along both lines of race and class (Gafar, 1996, p. 46). As a result, much as in every other period, race, class and gender have mediated both the experiences, opportunities and risks of various groups of women, though hardship and social restructuring has been a characteristic present in the lives of all of them.

Contemporary Guyana and the Existing Urban Context

In 1992 Guyana saw its first 'free and fair' election under increasing domestic and international pressure for Hoyte to restore elections and end the history of electoral fraud. Cheddi Jagan was finally brought into power under the PPP. Due to the continuation of race based voting and the Mixed Member-Proportional system in place, this ushered in an uninterrupted era of PPP rule since that time. The subsequent elections in 1997 and 2001 were tainted by ethnically based violence against Indo-Guyanese citizens, attacks which included vandalism, assaults and sexual violence against women due to the perception by Afro-Guyanese that the PPP was ruling only in favour of its Indo-Guyanese constituents (Trotz, 2004). Since the mid 2000s ethnic violence has been more intermittent but broad-based including attacks against police officers who are predominantly Afro-Guyanese. Although these acts have reduced in number, the tensions that underpin them remain unresolved.

Former President Bharrat Jagdeo has been lauded for his "macroeconomic management and astute diplomacy" (Mohabir, 2011, ¶17). This in part is attributed to the growth rate of between 3.3% - 4.5% per year between 2009 and 2011 in spite of the global economic downturn (World Bank, 2013a). This is owed largely to the liberalization policies which have made foreign investment appealing in Guyana, allowing multinationals to ramp up production particularly in the mining sector. The implementation of the Low Carbon Development Strategy (LCDS) has facilitated the continuation of much of the unadulterated logging and resource extraction taking place within the country. Through the LCDS the country must avoid producing 1.5 gigatonnes of

CO2 a year (Government of Guyana, 2010, p.8), in order for their partner government, Norway, to remain within its carbon producing parameters. Because of the country's low population and the large size of its forests which cover approximately 80% of the country's land mass (World Bank, 2013c), the Guyanese Government has been able to receive funds to do business as usual, without taking concern with the impacts these activities have on the environment and local communities. The communities hardest hit by the extractive industry are Amerindian populations who already comprise the most socially and economically marginalized group within the country.

Furthermore, while jobs have been created by liberalization policies in some areas including 9,000 jobs in the mining sector alone, these are concentrated in the interior regions and require heavy labour usually supplied by men (Government of Guyana, 2010). Furthermore, the mining sector has opened up opportunities in the illegal economy, creating pathways for the import of drugs from Brazil and Venezuela, and the export of persons, including women for the sex trade. As a result, urban centers such as Georgetown are increasingly sprouting large homes, and an observable increase in luxury items which appear to have produced a concomitant increase in violent crime (UNDP, 2012). Newspaper articles cite beatings, gun violence, and sexual assaults on a near daily basis, putting all segments of the population at risk. Though this may be a result of higher population concentration and reporting rates, urban centers are also characterized by higher rates of incest and rape reproducing poverty for women not only due to the physical and psychological costs, but the high incidence of sexually transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies as well. These are burdens which women, especially young women are unprepared to shoulder both socially and economically (S. Nageer, Personal Communications, July 24, 2012).

Meanwhile, poverty overall has not decreased since 1999 (Government of Guyana, 2011a), and Georgetown is still plagued by the juxtaposition of wealth with poverty. Dilapidated homes and neighbourhoods of urban slums border streets with villas protected by security guards and

generators for frequent power outages, which bring the economic activities of the middle and working classes to a standstill. Filtration systems for drinking water are privatized and the cost and burden of bringing heavy canisters of water into the home leave many of the poorest households without clean water for consumption. The increasing cost of property and rents has pushed the middle classes to build homes outside of the city, resulting in a costly and long commute to work, sometimes comprising 70% of people's daily income (see Chapter Six).

In addition, as a result of limited access to gainful employment, lack of specialized skills and childcare responsibilities, many women located in Georgetown bear a larger share of the burden of unemployment and poverty. Training programs funded by the state for poor women, focus on traditionally gendered industries such as aesthetics, hair dressing and nail design, while also providing funding in the form of micro-credit for small businesses. Because the markets for these services are saturated within the formal economy, women are pushed into the informal sector where hours are flexible but lengthy, and incomes are low, often operating the entire day just to cover their overhead costs, or to meet immediate expenses such as their family's immediate food requirements or children's school fees. In short, restructuring and economic growth have done little to improve the experiences of poor women, as there are greater social and historical processes at play which have perpetuated inequality.

Conclusion

Women as a group have experienced social and economic marginalization throughout Guyana's history, however it has been shaped by broader narratives of independence, and economic restructuring and has affected various groups of women differently based on their race and class. The needs of the economy during various periods, and the use of women's reproductive, care or remunerated labour helped to shape both the level of agency and inequality they experience. However, some of the achievements which have come out of these processes are

side effects of regimes of power (patriarchal, political and economic), rather than emanating from political action seeking to dismantle structures which perpetuate inequality. Therefore these achievements cannot be considered true advances towards women's cause, because in spite of having pro-women legislation, and having greater representation in education, employment and politics, women continue to be disadvantaged in comparison to their male counterparts, particularly in the poorest classes of society. Furthermore, although economic restructuring may have facilitated growth in Guyana, it doesn't mean that its benefits are reaching the poor, nor that the mechanisms which promote growth haven't, and wouldn't continue to, draw on poor people's labour (particularly the labour of women) producing advantages for a small class of people at the expenses of the large proportion that suffer. In the context of Guyana it becomes clear that inequality is mediated by social and historical processes, which have embedded structures that are perceived as natural. Thus, effective policies to promote gender (or race, or economic) equality, would have to include an analysis of these processes and structures in an attempt to dismantle them to produce substantive change.

Chapter 4: Methodology and Methods Producing Bottom-Up Knowledge through Narrative

While top down development strategies such as the MDGs purport to have the interests of the poor and marginalized at heart, and their corresponding econometric evaluation methods show that progress is being made on a number of indicators viewed to be relevant to these demographic groups, the lived experiences behind these numbers are never heard through quantitative research. Furthermore, the richness of the narratives emanating out of qualitative development research can help uncover themes that may otherwise not be captured through quantitative data, and also fosters bottom-up knowledge production that prioritizes the voices of the stakeholders of development interventions. In order to understand the experiences of women living under the auspices of the Millennium Development Goals and to appreciate their relevance, it was essential to use qualitative research methods for this study. Since qualitative studies cannot, and should not, be measured against the familiar indicators of objectivity, reliability and validity to establish methodological rigor as is the case in quantitative research, this chapter is dedicated to outlining the epistemological, methodological and practical considerations underpinning the research.

Ontology and Epistemology

This research was approached from a feminist perspective not only due to the aims and objectives of this project, but because of the imperative of ethics and adherence to non-oppressive practice which underpin feminist research methodologies and methods. Feminist research acknowledges that unequal social relations are structured to favour those with power, and disadvantage those without, where men have historically constituted the former and women the latter. However, feminists acknowledge that hierarchies of power and privilege are dependent

upon many axes of difference (including but not limited to race, class, sexual orientation and religion), and thus those marginalized by the intersection of the various facets of their identity, experience the world differently from those with power (Whitworth, 1994). As such, feminist research, among other things is a) inherently political and seeks to effect social change; b) seeks to blur the line between the subject and object by acknowledging the position of the researcher to the research; c) privileges the voices of those who are most often unheard starting with women as a diverse and differentially marginalized social group; and d) strays from exploitative research ends and methods in favour of making the research in some way meaningful to the participants (Sarantakos, 2005, p.55). Moreover, while feminist research methodologies can be both qualitative and quantitative (although this is highly contested³³), this study seeks primarily to explore perceptions and experiences, focusing on processes and understanding rather than un-contextualized statistical description. As such, my research objectives are inherently incompatible with quantitative methods (see Table 3). Through the first objective, using semi-structured interviews, I sought to explore the way which one set of respondents understands the extent to which MDG3 is on the agenda of the government, NGOs and international development organization in Georgetown, Guyana (see Appendix B, Tables B1-B4). Through the second objective, I sought to understand how a second set of respondents experience poverty and gender

³³ Harding's (1986) *The Science Question in Feminism* is the contemporary forerunner in feminist epistemological debates around the reductionist and exclusionary nature of positivist research arguing that it has historically been male dominated and is founded on notions of objectivity and value neutrality through the deployment of scientific inquiry for which quantitative methods are most conducive. Harding argues that positivism has systematically excluded women both as researchers and the researched, and that women must break from such sexist traditions in favour of feminist standpoint epistemologies which allow for, and legitimize female knowledge. Author's such as Lawson (1995), Oakley (1998) and Peake (2008) however argue that feminists rejection of science is invalid and has occurred in order to give credence and legitimacy to distinctly feminist methodologies in academia, but that that alternative approaches to quantitative methods, which keep feminist concerns central, are also possible and should not be disregarded.

in/equality through in-depth semi-structured interviews in order to establish the relevance of the MDGs for grassroots women (see Appendix B, Table B5).

Table 3: Research Objectives and Research Methods Used

Objective	Method
1. To explore the extent to which MDG3 is on the agenda of the government, NGOs and international development organization in Georgetown, Guyana	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with government bodies, international organizations and NGOs (see Appendix B, Table B1-B4) • Document analysis (Guyana's MDG reports, PRSPs, MICS, 2002 Census, UNDAF, Organizational literature)
2. To critically examine the relevance and applicability of the MDGs (particularly MDG3) to the everyday lives and futures of urban Guyanese grassroots women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth semi-structured interviews with grassroots women (see Appendix B, Table B5) • In-depth semi-structured interviews with government bodies, international organizations and NGOs (see Appendix B, Table B1-B4) • Document analysis (Guyana's MDG reports, PRSPs, MICS, 2002 Census, UNDAF, Organizational literature)

I have chosen *feminist* qualitative methodologies strategically, in part for the aforementioned reasons, and in part because the methodology of my choice subscribes to a post-positivist framework. Post-positivism is a metatheoretical position which posits that there is no *a priori* and objective social reality to be known. Post-positivism rather contends that “the social contexts of people’s lives are historically situated and constituted through people’s activities and the research process itself is an integral aspect of the construction of knowledge about society” (Gross & deVault, 2012, p. 209). In other words, ontologically speaking, I am of the constructionist school in which it is understood that there is no fixed reality to be known that is governed by natural laws and orderings (Bryman, 2004, p.16).

The post-positivist framework offers me a point of departure from which to acknowledge the importance of my experiences, values and positionality in the way that they inevitably colour and shape intersubjectively produced knowledge. While there are many competing feminist

epistemologies³⁴, two of these, feminist standpoint and feminist poststructuralism, *both* helped to inform the epistemological perspective from which I have chosen to approach this research. Feminist standpoint theory argues that researching those who inhabit the same (disadvantaged) social position (i.e. women researching women) makes objectivity stronger than researching those who do not share the same subject location because there is incentive to produce insights into the inequalities and contradictions of the social world as experienced by members of that group (Harding, 1986, p.26-28; for further debates on feminist standpoint, see also Hekman, 1997; Hill Collins, 1990; Smith, 1992). Feminist poststructuralism on the other hand argues that our gendered, class and racialized identities are produced by language which reflects hegemonic experience, and serve to reinforce structures of power. Witting (1980) argues that categories such as man and woman only have meaning in heteronormative systems of thought and Butler (1990) highlights that these binaries are created and essentialized by normative oppositions in hegemonic structures of power. These binaries are not limited to gender, but are true for all discursively dominant positions which are equated with 'sameness', and the marginal with 'other' (Kobayashi, 1997, p. 5). This creates a strong case against standpoint epistemologies because to give credence to essentialized identities (which according to poststructural feminists are precisely that). They ignore the multiplicity of identities individuals share which may include being a female, of X color, of X class, of X marital status, of X parental status, from X neighbourhood, in X city, in X country and the list goes on. Understandings based on gender or race or any other one given axis of difference does not do justice to the varying social positions individuals occupy as a result of the intersections of their various identities. Therefore, from a poststructural perspective, research

³⁴ These have most often included discussion over the sufficiency/insufficiency of the four most prominent feminist epistemological positions for the production of feminist knowledge/ These include feminist empiricism, socialist feminism, feminist standpoint theory and feminist poststructuralism/post-modernism (Falconer Al-Hindi, 1997, p. 146). A detailed discussion of each of the respective traditions is beyond the scope of this chapter.

based on one identity or standpoint such as the category of woman essentializes the category and reinforces its existence as something 'real' rather than socially constructed, which simultaneously excludes those who do not fit that conceptualization and hegemonically delimits alternative expressions of it. Furthermore, according to the poststructural position, the argument of an epistemologically privileged perspective from a particular standpoint is flawed due to the unachievable aim of objectivity since the social world does not exist prior to the way that we construct it with language. Poststructural feminism thus "envision[s] [an] epistemic situation as characterized by a permanent plurality of perspectives, none of which can claim objectivity—that is, transcendence of situations to a 'view from nowhere'" (Anderson, 2012, ¶55).

However, in highlighting the "paradox of difference and diversity" Kobayashi (1997) invokes the notion of a "postmodern nightmare" where "there is nothing but diversity, undifferentiated individuals isolated by their personal constructions, unable to connect to others or to make authentic representations, even of themselves because each of us live a shifting multiplicity of selves" (p.6). Such a place would put the feminist activist or researcher into a state of paralysis unable to connect to anyone, on any level in order to produce knowledge which may incite social change. Thus, social structures, whether-or-not discursively produced, have very real effects on the way in which people of varying subject locations experience the world which requires the researcher to privilege situated experience, while recognizing that all experiences are inherently underpinned by relations of power (Kobayashi, 1997).

Therefore, while I recognize that knowledge is co-constructed, situated and partial, I do not fall into a relativist position in which multiple perspectives are so competing as to prevent shared understanding. In fact, from my position feminist standpoint is a useful approach, so-far as its function is to delimit male-bias which operates to maintain binaries. As such I frame my research

through an interpretivist platform intersecting with critical realism³⁵ which subscribes to the notion that structures have a real existence in the social world. As a theory of knowledge, critical realism is concerned with identifying and deconstructing these structures in order to affect social change and reduce inequality. Falconer Al-Hindi (1997) argues that “a realist approach to understanding gendered oppression grounds feminist theorizing in concrete situations and retains feminisms political and empirical dimensions” (p 151). Taking this combined epistemological stance positions me to acknowledge the existence of multiple interpretations of reality while understanding that social phenomena are historically mediated by unequal power relationships, and the social phenomena which are produced have a very real existence for people and this is the locus from which the research must begin (Mikkelsen, 2005, p. 16-17). From this perspective, the research process must, from start to finish, seek to produce knowledge which can challenge the structures of power which reproduce inequality in the local context. Therefore, through this research I seek to understand the factors which reproduce poverty and inequality for grassroots women in Georgetown through an analysis of women’s own voices, as well as through meso-level interventions from both the state and external agencies, and the linkage of these interventions to structures of power. It is through the intersection of these perspectives that I have approached this project.

Methodology and Methods

Methodology

My choice of research project was informed by a desire to engage in transnational feminist praxis, the interplay of feminist ideas and practice across borders in order to challenge unequal power relations particularly across lines of gender, race and class and the global economy in an

³⁵ Critical realism recognizes that not all structures are perceptible to the senses and therefore hard facts about power relationships and power structures cannot always be identified through empirical methods. Although it often relies on empirical data, it should not be mistaken as being empiricist (Mikkelsen, 2005).

attempt to de-center “racialized, classed, masculinized, heteronormative logics and practices of globalization and capitalist patriarchies, and the multiple ways in which they (re)structure colonial and neo-colonial relations of subordination” (Nagar & Lock Swarr, 2009, p. 5). What is today considered transnational feminist praxis requires, among numerous other principles of what Mies (1983) considers “sound research”, a research plan that is characterized “by active participation in actions, movements and struggles for women’s emancipation” (p. 124), and that a “conscientization both for participants and researcher” (p. 126) must occur during the research process. Both Mies (1983) and Nagar (2003) believe that researchers from the global North *can* conduct research across borders with women in the global South so long as engagement “produces critical analyses based on local feminist praxis, and the ways that these connect with broader relations of domination and subordination” (Nagar, 2003, p.367).

As a white woman from the global North, my engagement in research in a foreign context is not unproblematic. My ability to fly in, gain insights into the lives of women with less social and economic power than my own, only to contribute to research which will likely have far less impact on my respondents than for my own education and career advancement, posed significant anxiety for me. It was not however with this in mind that I engaged in my current program of study, a decision which I made with full knowledge that field research would be an integral component of the work. My decisions stemmed from the acknowledgement that my social position as a middle-class, white Canadian woman accorded me a certain level of power and privilege not shared by others due to different intersections of their social and spatial identities. Gaining the knowledge of how this power and privilege has been constructed over time and space, and its predication and dependence upon the marginalization of others who do not share the same subject location, was the place from which I sought to engage in research which I hoped would have the potential to be transformatory. Delusions of grandeur notwithstanding, and full

recognition of the problematic “saving” discourse³⁶, imbued with colonial and imperial undertones which my intentions may appear to signal, it was not, and is not my intention to effect change guided by a moral imperative to “save” those with a more disadvantaged social position than my own. Rather, my hope has been such that at minimum the research process could contribute to transformation on a personal level in order to better understand how to most effectively position myself in solidarity with those who are part of a movement to deconstruct structures of power and domination which perpetuate inequality. And if I am both fortunate and effective, both the findings from the research, and the research process itself will have added at least a seed of value to the respondents and the local community, and at worst, have done no harm.

This research project also adheres to principles of a postcolonial approach to transnational feminist research and praxis as outlined by Mies (1983) and Nagar (2003) by having established rapport with the women’s organization Red Thread, prior to, and during my fieldwork. Before entering the MA at York University in Development Studies for which this thesis is a degree requirement, I contacted a number of potential supervisors whose research aligned with my own interests in order to gain insight into any potential internship opportunities with advocacy organizations working with women that offered more than services.

I was fortunate to have made contact with Professor Linda Peake who has been working with Red Thread since the 1980s and helped organize an interview with Red Thread’s coordinator Karen De Souza which would bring me to a six month internship with the organization prior to

³⁶Perceiving development as charity by citizens of Northern countries, or viewing countries in the South as requiring assistance and guidance from those in the North perpetuates a ‘saving discourse’ which undermines the agency of Southern citizens who are acutely aware of the challenges they may be facing and what is necessary to improve these conditions. Furthermore, it is reminiscent of a colonial paternalism and hides the responsibility of the global North in perpetuating inequality and deflects attention from the necessity to fundamentally restructure economic and social relations for long term equitable and sustainable development to occur (see: Heron, 2007; Easterly, 2007 and Abu-Lughod, 2002)

my entering the program at York. This organization is one of the most radical in the region, established out of the political left during the 1980s, and continues, through advocacy and service provision, to encourage women to become active agents in their own empowerment in order to bring about a broader movement of change. Red Thread is based in Georgetown, Region 4, my field research site. One of Red Thread's primary foci is anti-domestic violence work, in addition to a long standing interest in a living income campaign that seeks to free women from the double burden of care work and income earning, activities which Red Thread and other local NGOs have identified to have links with youth delinquency and the cycle of poverty, because women are unable to provide the structure and watchful eye needed for their children when drugs, violence and crime are rampant in their communities. Through more than three decades of work the organization has accorded a strong and highly reputable name for itself and is respected in many circles, and is trusted by women in poor communities.

During the 6 month internship with Red Thread spanning from March to August 2011 prior to the commencement of the program of study which brought me to this research, I worked alongside the women of Red Thread doing advocacy, teaching at-risk youth, assisting with administrative work, and fundraising to help support their underfunded programs. I was thus concurrently able to gain an understanding of how within the local context, gender inequality has and continues to be mediated by colonialism, racism, classism, homophobia and the global economy thereby allowing me to develop a "conscious partiality" (Cook & Fonow, 1990) to my future research respondents by identification with them through an understanding of local issues in addition to my gender identity and the socio-spatial and geopolitical facets of my positionality. This knowledge allowed me to design a research question which took into consideration local issues and could produce knowledge which would add value to the local struggle. As such, it was through the encouragement of my thesis supervisor, Professor Linda Peake, that I selected a

project in which I would address the relevance of the Millennium Development Goals for grassroots women.

My interest in the topic was twofold a) to understand the disconnect between women's realities and the way in which top down development strategies approach issues of empowerment and equality for women, and b) to critically engage with a development intervention primarily being endorsed and implemented by the global North, of which I am socially and economically a part. This research topic aligned with the broader aims and objectives of Red Thread's work, and I was supported by the organization and its members to conduct the research through their suggestions, insights and even assistance in the design of questions, recruitment of participants and the use of their space to conduct interviews during the research process.

Furthermore, upon my departure after collecting data, it was agreed that I would return upon completion of the thesis to present the research to Red Thread and to the grassroots respondents, in addition to members of the NGOs, government bodies and external development agencies who had participated in the research. Every effort will be made to share the research findings with the participants themselves, however Nagar (2003) reminds us to be cognizant of whom we are accountable to, if we are sharing data with the researched. All too often "high theory" and jargon make reports inaccessible to those with whom it is to be shared. As a result, I intend to present the information in oral format with the women of Red Thread and any of my participants able to attend the presentation. An executive summary free of academic language will be provided to my organizational participants in order to increase the chances that the document is read, and can potentially help elucidate inconsistencies, overlaps and opportunities.

Methods

The methods I chose to deploy for the purposes of this research project included both analysis of secondary data and semi-structured interviews. Because I wanted to involve Red Thread in the research as much as possible, in order to ensure that the trajectory of the research

project was on a meaningful path and the findings could potentially be useful, I asked members of Red Thread to be involved in the process as much or as little as they liked. The coordinator of Red Thread provided me with names of key individuals who had done gender or development work in the region, who she believed might be able to provide me with some context for the way that top-down gender equality and poverty reduction strategies were being deployed within Guyana. This assisted me with fine tuning my question to meet objective # 1 (see Table 3), provided me with information about organizations whose members I had previously not planned on interviewing, and even assisted me with setting up interviews with some representatives in government, international development organizations and NGOs (see Appendix B, Tables B1-B4). Secondly, the women of Red Thread agreed to conduct an informal focus group session with me in order to identify relevant questions from my questionnaire draft, to help me develop a proxy for concepts such as 'women's empowerment' and 'gender equality' and how to frame them in the Guyanese vernacular. Gibbs (1997) believes that focus groups can be an empowering experience due to "the opportunity to be involved in decision making processes (Race et al 1994), to be valued as experts, and to be given the chance to work collaboratively with researchers (Goss & Leinbach, 1996)" (As cited in Gibbs, 1997, ¶15). In keeping with my wish to keep a close working relationship with Red Thread throughout the research process, I did feel that after the focus group, my relationship with several of the members strengthened even further, and I was offered assistance in multiple other practical capacities, including improvement of my Creolese comprehension and language skills³⁷.

In-depth interviews

My desire to participate in non-oppressive feminist research, led me to choose semi-structured interviews as my primary research methods from which I would garner data for

³⁷ Creolese is the name of Guyanese vernacular.

analysis. According to Gross and de Vault (2012) in depth semi-structured interviews can provide researchers access to “ideas, thoughts and memories [in the participants’] own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (p. 216). As part of research ethics and the reflexive process, I was also interested to let participants express themselves as they saw fit rather than to try to force their experiences into uncontextualized categories in a close-ended survey. Although a survey may have been able to reach a larger number of women, I also decided to forgo breadth for richness because as the interviews revealed, a number of issues were brought to light which could not have come out in survey form.

In order to meet the first objective, I sought to conduct interviews with respondents responsible for gender programming and policies within government bodies, international organizations and NGOs (see Table 3). Every effort was made to speak to the head of the department or the person responsible for gender within the organization. The organizations that comprise my sampling frame from within the UN family include the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). International donor country and international cooperation organizations include the Canadian International Development Association (CIDA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), the Delegation of the European Union, and the Caribbean Community for Economic Development (CARICOM). Government bodies included the Ministry of Human Services, the Documentation Centre, the Women’s Bureau, the Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute (GWL), the Women of Worth Program (WoW), and the Board of Industrial Training. Non-Governmental Organizations and women’s groups included the Women and Gender Equality Commission, the Guyana National Working Group (for the achievement of the MDGs) (GWL), Red Thread Women’s Development Program, Women Across Differences, and Help and Shelter (see Appendix B, Table B1-B4). All of the names and titles of the

respondents were excluded from the thesis in order to protect their identity, however in relation to the interviews with women, proxies were used. Names of organizations were retained in the tables and the write-up, as this information is integral to the overall argument of the thesis.

In order to meet the second objective, I conducted interviews with grassroots women (see Table B1-B5). As will be discussed later, respondents emanated from various poor neighbourhoods³⁸ in Georgetown and ranged in age from 28 to 54. Most of my respondents were mixed race, three were Afro-Guyanese and one was Indo-Guyanese according to self-identification with those categories. All of the women were in some form of relationship, whether married, common-law or visiting, and had either children of their own living in the home, or were caring for extended family. Furthermore respondents had at least some secondary education, others tertiary, and all of the respondents were employed inside or outside of the home, most of who were working in the informal economy. All names and identifying information was changed within the write-up and quotes of the respondents in order to protect their identity.

Each type of interview had its own interview guide focusing on different issues, which particularly with the organizational interviews, was usually slightly adjusted to grasp at issues specific to that particular agency or individual (for sample interview questions used, see Appendix C). The organizational interviews focused on programs and policies relating to women and gender, and the relevant respondents knowledge of, association with, and opinions of them. Some were selected from the telephone directory, and I contacted all organizations that had potential to have a relationship with the MDGs and those, which I perceived, should have some form of gender programming. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, some key informants

³⁸ I use the term "poor neighbourhoods" here as opposed to the more specific expression "low-income", because when I made reference to "low-income neighbourhoods" in discussions with the women at Red Thread, one of the women asked "What do you mean by low-income? All households in Guyana are low-income, the households that we deal with here [at Red Thread] are poor, they are depressed" (W. White, Personal Communications, June, 26, 2012).

provided me with useful organizational contacts, and elsewhere numerous phone calls were made in order to find a relevant representative, make contact, and to set up and often reschedule interviews. Despite my best efforts, there were several cases where particularly important interviews were either promised but not followed through on, or a representative could not be reached, leading me to believe in many cases that responses to interview questions would be unfavourable to the image of the organization or interviewee, thus interview requests were indirectly denied³⁹ (see Appendix B, Table B4).

Although the grassroots women interviewed exerted considerable agency in our interviews veering the conversation away from topics they were not comfortable speaking about, or ending the interviews when they felt I had enough information, or I had wasted enough of their time, every effort was made to reduce what are ostensibly unremitting power differentials. However, in the case of organizations I was “studying up” (Becker & Aiello, 2013) and power dynamics in the interview process shifted. Respondents controlled the knowledge they sought to create and felt more comfortable to question my legitimacy as a foreign student researcher, often inquiring about my level of study, the purpose of the research, my decision to do fieldwork in Guyana, and as mentioned, to preview my interview guide before agreeing to conduct the interview. Similarly, Conti and O’Neil (2007) also found that when studying elites in the World Trade Organization (WTO), despite their own positions of power as academics, they encountered “problems of access, problems of authority in the interview setting, problems related to language, style and cultural capital” (p. 68) and argued that the use of reflexivity was key to overcoming some of these obstacles. Becker & Aiello (2013) have noted that studying-up can often be a challenge for feminist researchers who must negotiate the balance between possible gender, race and class dynamics in which they are complicit if they do not openly resist them (such as the use of ones

³⁹ In many cases potential interview respondents asked for the interview guide in advance, and in many of the cases interviews were later not accommodated.

own whiteness or class to attain interviews, or to disregard prejudiced commentary against marginalized groups), while maintaining rapport with the interviewee or gatekeeper in order to attain the information the researcher is seeking. While in some cases my whiteness, national identity and graduate student status assisted me with securing interviews, I experienced virtually no perceptible prejudices levelled against me, nor presumptions on the part of individual respondents which may have informed responses likely to have been ideologically distasteful to me (i.e. I did not encounter any scenarios where a respondent for example expressed something to the effect of condoning domestic violence). In other words, I avoided irrevocable complicity with structures of power, because respondents were generally open-minded to the research, and did not share with me, or expect me to remain neutral around, issues with which I do not politically align.

Furthermore, despite some obstacles relating to access and uncertainty around how honest or candid my respondents were actually being, research ethics still remained a central priority for me with the organizational interviewees, in which each respondent was given full control to choose the time and location of the interview, to choose which questions to answer or omit, to choose whether or not to allow the interview to be recorded, to have their names included or excluded from the final document, and also to ask of me any questions they felt appropriate. In keeping with some of the methods deployed by Conti and O'Neil, I exercised some reflexivity in how much information I volunteered about myself and the research project in order to accord the most genuine answers possible from the respondents (i.e. my relationship with Red Thread or my critical view of the MDGs). However I did not use deception or intentionally mislead any of my respondents about my views or social position, and always answered questions as directly and honestly as possible. I also left contact information for all of my respondents should they have any future concerns. Moreover, several of the organizational respondents exercised agency in limiting my access to relevant information in declining to be interviewed, further highlighting the

drastically different power dynamic at play when studying up, vs. studying down (Cassell, 1988). Out of 35 interview requests with representatives from organizations, nine of them declined in varying ways (see Appendix B, Table B4).

For my second research objective, given that the study involved an examination of the 'lived experiences' of low- income women whose experiences are both varied and underreported from their own perspective, an open- ended method of knowledge production such as the use of semi-structured interviews, seemed most appropriate. The women at Red Thread had originally agreed to assist me with recruiting participants, as well as acting as interpreters during the interviews as interpreters and to introduce me into the community due to my outsider status which they perceived would work to my disadvantage in terms of access to interviews and information sharing. The debate on insiderness and outsiderhood is long standing and ongoing, however there is a general consensus that there are particular advantages and disadvantages of each status (Merriam et al., 2001), including the fact that a researcher as 'outsider' may see patterns, or questions issues which an insider may not (Naples, 1996).

Previous research conducted with women in Guyana by Peake and Trotz (1999), a biracial research pairing of British and Guyanese descent respectively, had also conducted research in this manner where Trotz conducted her interviews alone, while Peake trained members of Red Thread to conduct the research in order to negotiate the potential disconnect between information sharing, comprehension and analysis. Furthermore, in relation to sampling, Noy (2008) argues that snowball sampling⁴⁰, "both uses and activates social networks" (p. 332) and that the quality of the connection established during the interview process, would mediate the quantity of referrals garnered for future interviews, therefore I had hoped to follow Peake and Trotz's endorsement of the use of an interpreter and to have the women of Red Thread initiate

⁴⁰ A method of sampling in which each participant recruits another participant from within their own social circle (Noy, 2008).

recruitment of the first participants in order to instil a sense of trust in interviewees and increase the number of potential respondent referrals through the use of snowball sampling. Unfortunately due to Guyana's unstable political situation, a crisis had erupted during my stay, whereby a number of protesters confronting electrical hikes were shot by the police in a nearby town, and the members of Red Thread became preoccupied with the aftermath of the event, thus becoming unable to assist me as interpreters nor as much in other areas of my research. Furthermore, given the dire economic situation confronting the demographic of women I was seeking to interview, during the focus group, I was discouraged from using the snowball sampling technique in order to avoid any form of indirect coercion to participate in the name of financial gain on account of the GYD \$2,500 stipend which I gave to grassroots respondents as a gratuity for their participation⁴¹. If word got out that I was providing payment for interviews, there would likely be a number of women recruited by snowball sampling who would engage in the research out of need, rather than as truly voluntary participants, which goes against principles of research ethics.

As a result, neither snowball sampling, nor an interpreter was used during the interviews due to ethical reasons for the former issue, and the limited capacity of members of Red Thread to continue to assist me in the latter. However, between the women at Red Thread, and other contacts previously established during my prior visit to Guyana, two-thirds of the participants were recruited through a key informant, and the other third were recruited through independent canvassing (see Appendix B, Table B5). Red Thread assisted with recruiting women who had used their services or had conducted advocacy work alongside them. I had asked them to approach women who were both mothers and were of a low income from a variety of

⁴¹ I had originally planned not to provide a stipend for this very reason, however it was suggested to me by the members of Red Thread to provide at least a symbolic amount, due to the lengthy answers it was determined that the questions could provoke given both the nature of the questions themselves, and of Guyanese to "gaff", or engage in lengthy conversation, which could significantly cut into women's limited time.

neighbourhoods within their reach. When it became obvious that the involvement of Red Thread would be limited, I contacted a friend who did volunteer work in a masjid in a low-income area, and she was also able to recruit three participants for me based upon the same criteria (see Appendix B, Table B5). Once the participants had been selected, I contacted them either via telephone or in person to arrange a suitable time, place and date for the interviews. The decision as to where interviews took place was dependent on women's comfort level and convenience. If women were too busy to leave their workplace to do the interview, it was conducted there, if they preferred the home due to child care responsibilities or convenience it was conducted in their home. Other interviews were conducted at Red Thread or the masjid which the women attended in many cases because homes were usually occupied by a number of members of the extended family, making it more difficult to discuss private issues. In such cases where interviews were conducted in the possible presence of others, discretion was employed, in order to reduce any tension which could potentially be caused by sensitive questions asked with other people nearby.

While concerns around access and trust in interviews due to my positionality were warranted, a number of factors may have contributed to helping me overcome or diminish these obstacles. Lee (1993) argues that in research with sensitive topics, it is not until you begin to conduct interviews that a sensitive topic is identified, or one originally perceived as threatening is nullified. The research conducted by Peak and Trotz focused on the way in which contemporary racialized identities between Afro-Guyanese and Indo-Guyanese women were historically and geographically produced, and continue to be reproduced today, which is likely to have been a more politically charged topic and one more difficult for participants to discuss with a white researcher than issues relating to livelihoods and household maintenance which all women across class and race face to varying degrees. Furthermore, Naples (1996) argues that "'insiderness' or 'outsiderness' are never fixed or static positions, but rather they are ever-shifting and permeable

social locations” (p. 84) which in practice positioned me as an outsider on many issues, but an insider or at least an informed outsider on others due to my relationship with Red Thread and the amount of time I spent in the country. In the end, virtually none of the participants, which Red Thread helped me to recruit, asked me to skip any questions or seemed reserved in their responses, even while I conducted the interviews alone, highlighting the benefit of establishing oneself in the community and building rapport with individuals who can act as informal gatekeepers, key informants or sponsors (Jupp, 2006).

It was with a number of respondents for whom I did independent canvassing, where I could sense that participants were slightly more guarded in terms of how much information they were willing to share. While in one way this may have been interpreted as a limitation of the study, on the other hand doing independent canvassing allowed me, within a short timeframe, to recruit from other low income neighbourhoods where Red Thread did not have immediate reach and provided me with insight into whether women appeared to share similar experiences across varying neighbourhoods in Georgetown (see Appendix B, Table B5).

While in-depth interviews offer a more relational and less sterile research method for both participants and researchers, conducting qualitative research and doing interviews and focus groups, is not in itself non-oppressive or ‘feminist’. Patai (1991) argues that while interviews conducted by field researchers of all backgrounds can be an enjoyable process for participants because “not enough people are listening” (p. 142), they can also be emotionally charged and leave participants wanting more than researchers can give after the interviews conclude. Patai believes that the power dynamic created during research, particularly when ‘studying down’, is irreconcilable even with the best intentions. Thus, if transnational research is to be conducted, unequal power relations must be acknowledged and mitigated to the greatest extent possible in the given context through reflexivity. deVault (1999b) discusses the option of allowing an

opportunity for discussion prior to the interview and for the participant to ask questions of the researcher to diminish the power-knowledge hierarchy, a point that was also made by Mies (1983). While conducting the interviews, it was often difficult to strike the balance of reducing power dynamics while mediating participants' expectations as I wanted to make respondents feel as comfortable as possible and to allow the women to tell their own stories in as much or as little depth as they felt comfortable. Before engaging in the interviews, through the verbal informed consent process I explained the purpose of my research and that each participant was free to skip any questions or end the interview at any time, to decline having the interviews recorded and also I offered the interviewee the opportunity to ask me any questions about myself or the research before, during, or anytime after the interview. A number of interviews were under 45 minutes long, however some encroached upon 3 hours as some participants had an obvious desire to debrief about their daily struggles, making it challenging for me to keep at a safe distance so as not to leave them feeling disappointed that I did not have any effective advice or hard and fast solutions to their problems. This is where my relationship with Red Thread again became a great asset, as my connection with the organization allowed me to inform my participants about their services and advocacy work in order to provide them with another channel through which they might address some of the issues that they face daily.

Furthermore, deVault (1999a) argues for active listening skills and going beyond considerations of insider/outsider identities when researcher and participant come from different racial backgrounds, as "achieving access and rapport is only the beginning" (p. 85). According to deVault "hearing" race and ethnicity requires in-depth analysis, particularly across cultures, because in the process of misinterpretation, one can reinforce the type of class and cultural divisions which feminist researchers seek to reduce (p. 85-86). However, in addition to recruiting participants, having a gatekeeper or sponsor such as a member of Red Thread or an affiliate of the

masjid for the sake of increasing trust, did make dialogue feel more free and less restrained in comparison to the interviews which were conducted with participants recruited through independent canvassing, pointing to the importance of establishing rapport. Addressing de Vault's concern around "hearing race", having previously spent a significant amount of time in Guyana and working with at risk urban youth greatly assisted me with comprehension of urban Guyanese vernacular spoken by many of my respondents, as well as in understanding geographic or temporal points of reference and cultural norms and expressions. This further increased both the quality of the conversations with my respondents, and of the knowledge produced. Further considerations around representation and voice will be discussed in the interview analysis section.

Data Analysis

Interview Data

Due to the sheer volume of recorded interviews (approximately 40 hours), and the length of time required to transcribe each hour of recording (approximately 4-5 hours) while keeping in mind the limited timeframe available to complete the thesis, most but not all sections of each interview were transcribed. Sections omitted included my personal introduction, queries posed by the respondent at the end of the interview, and/or conversational tangents not immediately pertinent to the research objectives. I opted, however, to produce verbatim vs. clean transcriptions in order to preserve as much of the essence of the participants' meaning as possible given that much of the non-verbal and emotional cues are lost on the recording and are even farther removed once a transcript is prepared into a textual document (Poland, 1995). Additionally, hand written notes on the interview guide (see Appendix B2), taken during each interview, augmented the transcriptions. Where there was an important piece of information that was unclear due to poor recording quality, which included noisy fans in the background, heavy rain on metal roofs, in

addition to background discussions and traffic, every effort was made to contact the respondent to ensure accuracy of original meaning.

Inductive analysis drawing on methodologies of Grounded Theory was used to draw conclusions from the data. Inductive analysis is the practice of establishing “patterns, themes, and categories” (Patton, 2002, p.453) from within the data, rather than the setting out from the beginning to prove or disprove a hypothesis. However upon deriving a hypothesis from the data which occurs through categorization and coding, by drawing connections between concepts (part of the analysis process) this is considered deductive, meaning that Grounded Theory approaches draw on both inductive and deductive processes (Patton, 2002, p.454). This was obvious from the commencement of the research process where the research topic was selected out of both a gap in the academic literature, and an interest in better understanding grassroots women’s needs. As a result relevant respondents were interviewed, and through the interviews the research and interview questions further changed and new respondents were added to the sampling frame. During analysis, data was coded, and concepts were derived which later fed into broader theoretical frameworks relating to conceptualizations of gender equality and the economic growth based trajectory of contemporary development approaches (Bryman, 2004).

According to Mikkelsen (2005), one method of data analysis amenable to interview data is the construction of a matrix, which includes the interview questions, and respondent answers in order to "describe context, to analyse historical trends, causal networks and relations, sequencing, causal models, etc." (p. 183). Because the organizational interviews were based upon the respondent’s knowledge and awareness of MDG3 and any potential links existing between their policies and programs, I created tables to indicate the primary purpose of each organization, and also included responses the respondents gave to key questions coded in “yes” or “no” format with footnotes if the response was not cut and dry (see Appendix B, Tables B1-B3). This made

generalizing about MDG3 knowledge between organizations simpler, and by including the tables in this document, it also helps to facilitate easily accessible interpretation of the data for readers.

The interviews with women were also coded into cells within a table (see Appendix B, Table B5), but primarily for demographic information in order to give the reader a sense of the respondent's background, in addition to how the respondents were recruited. While recognizing that the sample was too small to make gross generalizations, this table also facilitated an understanding of how numerous issues appeared to be similar across urban neighbourhood, age, race and religion. However, because these interviews were lengthier, more in-depth and of an exploratory nature, the responses to questions could not be boxed into a table and the primary data analysis for these interviews took a different form. According to Bryman (2004) making connections between ideas and developing themes can begin as early as the transcription phase and can continue on rereading the transcripts, by making informal notes that can help prime ideas during deeper phases of analysis. At the time of the interviews, a number of notes which included potential themes and connections with previous respondents were jotted down on the interview guides, in addition to a number of notes which I added in purple pen during transcription to distinguish them from my original comments. After re-reading the transcripts, notes and tables several times, and including further key notes and ideas in the margins, those ideas were further 'fragmented' into key concepts and themes (Bryman, 2004). I then opened a number of notepad files in order to organize quotes and analyses under major themes, which would later comprise sections of the analysis chapters. In order to preserve the participant's voice and to avoid as much as possible the loss of context of what the participant was saying, I wanted to ensure that I was not forcing the narratives shared by the participants into themes that were too contrived or narrow simply to prove the existence of a situation or experience. Rather, many long quotes were maintained in order to allow the data to "tell [its] own story" (Patton, 2002, p.457). While it is

certainly relevant to argue that a respondent's voice is delimited through the researcher's own biases, politics and priorities as evidenced through what the researcher chooses to ask in the interviews and include in the analyses, it is also true that all social interactions occur in relation to the people involved in the interaction and the social context in which it occurs. Therefore the inclusion of quotes or analyses emanating from the participants responses are drawn from what is believed the respondent "is trying to tell us within the context of the [research] relationship, this research setting, and a particular location in the social world rather than making grand statements about just who this person or 'voice' is" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, pp. 136-137). Furthermore, each respondent "makes choices about what to emphasize and what to hold back" (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998, pp. 136-137) thereby exercising agency over the knowledge produced.

Secondary Data

In order to get a better understanding through multiple sources where women stand socially and economically, and how much importance is being placed on MDG3, secondary data including relevant documents such as Guyana's three MDG reports, the 2006 Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), the 2002 Census, Guyana's two Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), the National Development Strategy (NDS), the United Nation Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), and the International Development Association Guyana Country Assistance Strategy were examined to answer questions around the depth of integration of MDG3 within them, in addition to the existence of other gender related interventions. Documents were selected based on relevance to the topic of study, and were collected both through an independent review of accessible data, and through an iterative process of learning about and discussing various documents through my interviews with my respondents and later reviewing them, only to better inform further questions. These document analyses have taken a secondary role in meeting my research objectives.

Conclusion

Within this chapter I have attempted to provide clarity regarding my research and writing processes in order to display for the reader my ontological and epistemological assumptions, and to show that my methodological approach was careful, sensitive, strategic and rigorous.

Furthermore, I also highlighted reflexive and positionality considerations in an attempt to ensure that I avoided creating, as much as possible, an exploitative or uncomfortable research situation for my participants while acknowledging that I am an integral part of the knowledge intersubjectively produced. Lastly, the iterative process involved in the analysis that began with the research question and continued post transcription into coding and broader connection with theory was briefly discussed.

Chapter 5: Inciting Change, or *Less* of the Same?

Institutional Engagement with Gender Issues and MDG3

This chapter seeks to address the extent to which MDG3 linked programs and policies are on the development agenda in Guyana, and to show how much importance is attached to this Goal by the government, UN agencies and NGOs located in Georgetown. Through an analysis of documents from these organizations, in addition to interviews with key actors within them, the data appears to indicate that MDG3 is far from ubiquitous in their policies and every day discourses (see Appendix B, Tables B1-B3). First, I highlight how the integration of the MDGs into the PRSPs appears to have detracted attention from more progressive development frameworks, as well as the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Second, I address the extent to which representatives of organizations interviewed have a working knowledge of MDG3 and its indicators, including their awareness of the existence of associated programs and policies. In this chapter I will attempt to address how neoliberal hegemony and interventions for the sake of political gain have displaced progressive development policy which held social justice and substantive gender equality central. Furthermore, I will highlight how the MDGs have not been implemented in the Guyanese context in the way they were conceptualized to connect grassroots citizens with development policy, and that an overemphasis on the purported achievement of indicators of MDG3 may have had the effect of stagnating continued progress on both the Goal, and more ambitious interventions geared towards substantively enhancing women's status.

The Primacy given to Economic Growth over Social Justice in the Government of Guyana's Development Policies

As discussed in Chapter Two the MDGs were designed as a development framework, which mirrored many of the International Development Targets (IDTs) consulted on and proposed by mainly OECD countries, with additional influence from UN meetings that took place

during the 1990s including the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Though this mirroring was critiqued by numerous scholars and civil society organizations for their exclusion from the consultations, and due to the reductionist nature of the Goals, the content of the MDGs was intentionally broad in order to reach as wide an audience as possible, and to achieve international consensus for the first time in both developed and developing countries with the aim of fostering accountability and cross-national comparison as well as peer monitoring and evaluation. However, the 2003 Human Development Report which focused entirely on the MDGs, was clear to note that the MDGs are not a “programmatic instrument”, but rather a framework which requires a nationally owned and instituted development strategy that would be consistent with the MDGs. The report encouraged the use of PRSPs as a method for implementing the MDG framework for low and low-middle income countries (UNDP, 2003, p. 20). However, the PRSPs are not policy instruments designed *around* the MDGs. Rather, the PRSPs have a history that precedes the MDGs, and were implemented for the purpose of outlining how countries would reinvest cancelled debts and new loans for poverty alleviation (discussed previously in Chapter Two). Based on this description, it might appear that the PRSPs are the perfect tool with which to address the MDGs, however when loans are granted primarily by the World Bank and IMF, which perceive growth to be the best way to facilitate poverty reduction, the inclusion of social policy to meet the MDG has taken a back seat in numerous country contexts (Harrison, Klugman & Swanson, 2005; Schech & Dev, 2007; Sumner, 2006).

Guyana has three concurrent formal development strategies. The National Development Strategy (NDS), the PRSPs, and the LCDS. Although the NDS is still formally considered a development framework in the official rhetoric of the Government of Guyana, in practice this document has been replaced by the PRSP and the LCDS. The NDS, however, is the most democratic and Human Development and human rights oriented document of the three, and is the

only one that gives any consideration to women and gender. The NDS not only set a national precedent for inclusive development when it was first drafted in 1997, but was also recognized internationally for its democratic consultations across all levels of government and civil society acknowledging and addressing the challenges which deep racial divisions pose in Guyana's plural society, while addressing the structural constraints reinforcing gender inequality. Unlike its more recent counterparts the PRSP and LCDS, the NDS clearly and immediately outlines a set of social and economic strategies to meet its five objectives⁴², the very first on the list being the elimination of racism and prejudice (Government of Guyana, 2001, p.4). Following that, the NDS prescribes to put measures in place to ensure that "all future governments of Guyana are as inclusionary, participatory, accountable and transparent as possible" (Government of Guyana, 2001, p.4) in order to foster an environment in which racism can end and an effective government can rule. It is only after those two strategies are proposed that the macroeconomic policy and economic management are mentioned and include strategies such as tax reform, the promotion of local industry and export, and creating a friendly environment for foreign investment, not however just for the investors, but also for the people and country of Guyana as a whole by developing a "strategy and code both to encourage financiers to invest in the country, and to spell out clearly the terms and conditions under which they would be required to operate" (Government of Guyana, 2001, p.4).

Additionally, the NDS employed a substantive form of gender mainstreaming throughout the document. It outlines the impacts that unequal gender relations have on women's lives and on the development of Guyanese society as a whole, while carefully applying a gendered lens to

⁴² These objectives include the attainment of high rates of economic growth; eliminating poverty in Guyana; achieving geographical unity; attaining an equitable geographical distribution of economic activity; and diversifying the economy (Government of Guyana, 2001, p. 3).

each aspect of development policy it proposes in order to be conscious of the implications and impacts the policies may have on women. The NDS also addresses structural constraints to women's inequality and takes up issues such as: the importance of women's role in the family; the risk of violence women face; the need to support women's sexual and reproductive rights and to improve maternal health; the existence of discrimination and bias in the curriculum, education system and in the labour force; the exacerbated experience of poverty in women's lives and the need for mechanisms to substantively increase women's political representation and pay equity; in addition to the need to consider women's role in protecting the environment (Government of Guyana, 1997). Furthermore, an entire chapter is dedicated to women, which goes as far as discussing attitudes around women's gendered roles, the disconnect between *du jure* and *de facto* rights, and a need for accurate data about all aspects of social and economic life disaggregated by sex. The NDS therefore integrated the twelve priorities outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), which gave the document legitimacy in terms of its dedication to the human rights of both men and women. On account of the above noted elements, and many more for space does not allow further discussion, the NDS was the closest approximation to a system which judges the soundness of economic policies based on how well they facilitate "distributive justice, equity, provisioning needs for all, freedom from poverty and discrimination, social inclusion, [and] development of human capabilities" (Elson & Cagatay, 2000, p. 1348).

Gurevitch (2010) found that the NDS was not effectively instituted however, due to the divisive political landscape in Guyana. Since the document promotes unity across class race and gender, it is inimical to the interests of the Indo-Guyanese backed ruling party, the PPP, which has maintained a stronghold on power over the last 22 years. Therefore, because PRSPs are a prerequisite for debt forgiveness and loan negotiations, which have been ongoing processes that the PPP has been engaged in, and benefited from, when the PRSP processes began in 1999, it

easily replaced the NDS and became the country's dominant development framework.

Furthermore, since the LCDS (which came approximately ten years later) deals with gaining economic benefit out of the physical environment through the 'sale' of the country's carbon credits to Norway and was poised to be a way of preserving Guyana's natural environment in the country's development efforts, it too has been given primacy in Guyana's development plan. However, unlike the NDS, the LCDS's social policy only extends as far as the promotion of sustainable livelihoods can be facilitated through the provision of grants "for essential equipment and marketing activities to small and micro businesses in key low-carbon growth sectors and restructuring sectors: for example, fruit and vegetables, aquaculture, sustainable value-added forestry, eco-tourism, and sustainable-model mining" (Office of the President, 2010, p. 56). Moreover, gender is only addressed in the LCDS in relation to these grants being extended to women.

Returning to the PRSP, Gurevitch (2010) argues that while the authorities that created it for Guyana urged that it had "significant inputs" from the NDS, it omitted many of its democratic policy recommendations for the sake of maintaining its stronghold on power. Furthermore, in creating PRSPs, numerous consultations need to be held with various members of civil society. However, in the case of Guyana's first or interim PRSP (iPRSP), these consultations were ostensibly glossed over because the document was purported to be heavily based on the NDS for which long and highly inclusive consultations had just recently taken place. As a result a certain level of unfounded legitimacy was immediately accorded to the PRSP although much of the social policy of the NDS was omitted, and an independent set of consultations for this document did not take place. In addition to the purpose it served for the PPP, the omission of the most progressive elements of the NDS was likely facilitated by the primacy the World Bank and IMF give to neoliberal economic development policies. Given that the PRSPs were initially a

prerequisite for debt relief associated with the enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Country initiative (eHIPC), the Guyanese government would have had to implement macroeconomic policies that align with the World Bank and IMF's perspective on economic development. Those outlined in the NDS however, were not likely to pass muster as they hinted of redistribution and protectionism.

Moreover, since the MDGs are integrated into the "policy framework and monitoring arrangements used under the PRSP" (Akram-Lodhi, 2009, p.12) as previously mentioned, PRSPs have become the primary vehicle for outlining strategies for the achievement of the MDGs. As a result, the exclusion of progressive NDS policies from the Guyana PRSP was legitimized through their replacement by Human Development and human rights oriented targets and indicators of the MDGs. Furthermore, because the MDGs are underpinned by the notion that growth will facilitate their achievement as discussed in Chapter Two, growth based interventions have had a tendency to overshadow social policy within the PRSPs, and Guyana's PRSP does not appear to be an exception to the rule. Feminist economist Diane Elson (2004) has herself noted this paradox and its relationship to the attainment of international funding "the Millennium Development Compact proposed by the Millennium Project Secretariat and the Human Development Report Office argues that the PRSPs which countries have to prepare in order to get World Bank loans, should be MDG compliant, rather than the MDG plans being PRSP compliant. Public investment should be reinvigorated and take a leading role" (Elson, 2004, p. 7).

Upon examination of the most recent PRSP from 2011, there is in fact an immediately evident disconnect between it and the NDS. The format and tone of the document is far more technocratic and relies heavily on quantitative indicators to make claims about the success of economic growth for the development of the country, and the need for more liberalizing interventions to continue boosting growth (this is without clearly acknowledging that growth has

done little reduce poverty, except for the period directly following the economic crisis of the 1970s and 80s where the economy nearly collapsed –i.e. there was nowhere to go but up). Where the NDS addressed the importance of social aspects of development by the fourth page of the 363 page document, the 170 page 2011 PRSP scarcely made note of it for the first time on the 31st page in the unitary chapter reviewing social sector policies and programs. Moreover, while the NDS referred to ‘women’ and ‘gender’ over 300 times throughout the document, the PRSP made reference to the terms less than 30 times, while ‘growth’ was mentioned over 130 times in the PRSP as compared with 116 times in the NDS (a document over twice the length of the PRSP). While economic factors play a large role in individual’s experiences with poverty, as has been studied many times elsewhere and as I have attempted to outline earlier in the Guyanese case, growth without redistribution does not necessarily reduce poverty, and perhaps attention to other methods for improving citizen’s economic well being and access to jobs should be more deeply considered.

Furthermore, the quality of the discussions around gender and women in the PRSP are limited to headcounts and international agreements the government has signed on to, without discussing how these numbers and conventions qualitatively apply to women’s lives. The PRSP offers no discussion of sexual and reproductive rights, only a passing reference to violence against women, and no mention of child care regimes that would reduce the double burden of income earning and care labour. It would seem then, that the integration of the MDGs into the PRSP signals a step backwards in terms of promoting women’s substantive equality.

Moreover while the MDGs were mentioned 15 times total in the entire document, about a quarter of the references pertained to comments about the MDG Reports, another quarter to cursory discussions of existing policies in health, education and infrastructure, and the other half to the growth based approach to improving poverty rates associated with MDG1. There was not a

single reference to MDG3, thereby rendering the PRSP devoid of any programmatic guidelines to achieving that goal. This highlights the differential orientation of the PRSP as compared to the NDS where the social is sacrificed by prioritizing the *ends* of development through growth as opposed to focusing on *means* of development through participation and inclusion. This has the effect of marginalizing the priorities which Guyanese citizens outlined in the NDS consultations, and has resulted in the sidelining of priorities of the BPFA as they were integrated into the NDS. This suggests that the integration of the MDG framework into the Guyana PRSP has reduced the scope of possibility for achieving gender equality.

Public Engagement with the MDGs

By outlining how the prevailing national policy documents appear to be devoid of any form of gender policy and no mention of MDG3, the previous section creates the context for the following sections in relation to why MDG3 policies may not be on the development roster within organizations dealing with gender and/or development in Guyana. However, international institutions and development organizations can also influence meso-level policies and organizational approaches in developing country contexts, both outside of, and within the government, thus it was important to examine the extent to which MDG3 achievement is integrated into the policies and programs at the institutional level in Guyana.

As discussed in Chapter Two, according to the 2003 Human Development Report which outlined the impetus behind, and the way to move forward on the MDGs, public engagement with the Goals was considered to be key to their achievement, a point which was also emphasized by a number of UN organizations and reports⁴³. According to Raghuram (2008) “it was hoped that through reiterating the MDGs, citizens could remind their governments of their responsibilities to

⁴³ See: OECD, 2007; MDGF, 2013; OHCHR, 2013; United Nations, 2003; United Nations, 2012; United Nations Secretary General, 2009.

creating a more equal society” (p.242). However, in order for ordinary citizens to take up the MDGs as a platform from which to advocate for human rights, it would follow that the Goals must be shared with citizens by the institutions responsible for creating and supporting them, as well as by donor governments who signed on to the Millennium Declaration in which they agreed to help achieve the Goals through a “system of shared responsibilities” (UNDP, 2003, p. 15).

As the capital of Guyana, Georgetown is the city in which all in-country offices of the United Nations, international development agencies, government offices and most NGOs are located. As noted in Chapter Four, I sought interviews from representatives of all of the key institutions and organizations engaging in either development work or service provision and/or advocacy around women’s rights issues with in-country offices in Georgetown (see Appendix B, Tables B1-B4). In addition to these organizations, 30% of Guyana’s population is located in the same urban center. If achievement on the MDGs is in part dependent upon public engagement with the framework, and the framework is publicized as one which seeks to connect populations of the global North and South through mutual action on the Goals, one would presume that educational campaigns and materials promoting the MDGs by some of these organizations would exist. However during my visits to Guyana, this did not appear to be the case. Public spaces were devoid of any signage that might inform the public of the Goals, and even the offices of the 19 organizations I interviewed scarcely exhibited any public sign of the integration of the MDG framework into their mandates and work plans. The few posters I observed were posted in hallways located beyond a number of security checkpoints, or in back offices that would scarcely be frequented by the public, especially not by the poorest and most marginalized citizens of society who are said to comprise the stakeholders of the MDG framework.

The only indication of any MDG public engagement effort that became apparent over the course of the data collection period ranging from May 1st, 2012 to August 18th, 2012 was

reference to a workshop entitled “The role of Civil Society in achieving the Millennium Development Goals” held on October 4th, 2007. The UNDP Guyana website indicates that the Office of the President, the Ministry of Foreign affairs and the UNDP hosted the workshop in order to bolster advocacy around “poverty reduction and economic development” as well as for the media, civil society organizations and NGOs to advocate “further for the MDGs within their own organizations and communities” (UNDP Guyana, 2012, np.). When I contacted the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for an interview to discuss the workshop, my request was declined, and I was unable to find a representative from the UNDP with institutional memory of the event.

Part of the reason for the lack of advertising and public outreach around the MDGs may relate to the fact that only 12 of the 19 organizations in the study formally subscribe to the MDG framework. The NGOs from which the respondents were interviewed such as Help and Shelter and Women Across Differences only integrate the MDGs into their work as far as their funding comes from the government or various UN agencies. When asked if their organizations were involved with the framework in any way, the respondent from Help and Shelter said “as far as I remember, not directly, but as I mentioned in the work that we do, we would more or less focus on the equality of women” while later going on to refer to some of their programs funded by UNICEF and UNIFEM and the links she believed existed between these UN bodies and MDG3. The respondent from Women Across Differences noted that the organization’s relationship to the MDGs was tied to its involvement with the UNFPA and the projects it funds. The respondent from Red Thread indicated that they do not subscribe to the framework at all; the member interviewed felt that it is a waste of the membership’s energy to try and push the government to adhere to the many international agreements it signs on to, as the agreements often translate into little more than quantitative goals that do little to substantively empower women even if the goals are met.

[Red Thread] has not integrated them into their framework. I don't believe, I don't believe that any of us sees -I mean half of Red Thread doesn't even know what they are and those of us that know what they are- I don't think that we see them as offering the price of fish as we say here.

In other words, according to the respondent from Red Thread, the MDGs are not only obsolete in the day-to-day activities of the organization, but to them are also irrelevant.

Moreover, while the USA, Canada and the European Union signed on to the Millennium Declaration, the in-country office representatives from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the delegation of the European Union reported that the MDGs were not formally integrated into their local mandates, and that despite some synergies there were no programs directly linked to MDG3. Most of the work of these organizations comes in the form of either budget support for the government, or targeted projects that align with their own institutional priority themes. Since the MDGs were supposed to comprise a "global partnership" between countries of the North and South, it would appear that the MDG framework has not influenced their efforts toward global cooperation in a way which would facilitate the promotion of, or organizing around, the MDGs as a shared set of Goals. Rather than engagement in collaborative efforts which could promote the achievement of the Goals from the bottom-up, responses I received from the international development organizations with in-country offices in Guyana indicated that interventions aligned with their own country's priorities, and most of the respondents had not been around long enough to speak to whether the priorities and working culture within their organizations had changed since the international implementation of the MDG framework.

Institutional Attention to the Issues which Underpin and Comprise the Indicators of MDG3

Knowledge of MDG3 Indicators and Existing Interventions

Even within the 12 organizations that formally subscribe to the MDG framework, there was both limited knowledge of, and minimal programmatic attention to, the indicators of MDG3. This was perhaps most surprising in relation to the UNDP which is the UN's specialized agency for development, and is mandated to implement programs for the achievement of the MDGs in addition to its facilitatory role in preparing MDG reports and collaborating with other UN in-country offices on policy advocacy, and the promotion of "a strong response to national MDG priorities through UNDAFs and Country Programmes" (UNDP, 2013b, ¶5). The interview respondent from the UNDP noted that while there have historically been 'gender focal projects' emanating from within the UNDP, these were not MDG related, nor is there any gender focal project being implemented at the present time. The representative noted that each in-country UNDP office has a different focus depending on the needs and priorities within the country, and that in Guyana, UN Women, UNICEF and the UNFPA are the UN arms that would be responsible for women centered programs. Based on this response, it would appear that gender equality and the empowerment of women are not perceived as a major 'needs and priorities' for the UNDP to undertake in Guyana through its in-country office. This finding is particularly troubling for two reasons. First, as limited as the indicators of MDG3 may be, parity on all of them has not yet been achieved (see Table 1, Chapter One). Second, UN Women, whose mandate would most closely align with the achievement of MDG3 (the UNFPA deals with family planning and UNICEF with children's rights), does not have an in-country office in Guyana, and in its absence it would follow that the UNDP, with its international mandate to facilitate the achievement of the MDGs, would be second in line to direct attention to this Goal.

When I contacted the UN Women regional office in Barbados in response to my queries about UN Women's role in facilitating the achievement of MDG3 in Guyana, I was asked to refer to the 2005 UNIFEM report "Gender and the Millennium Development Goals: More Specific Targets and Indicators for the Caribbean". The representative stated that many of the recommendations around the MDGs from within this report had been taken up by CARICOM, particularly with respect to violence against women. This document, of which I was already aware, marks an important step forward in creating a nationally owned set of targets and indicators in line with the BPFA that are more relevant to the local context. However, this report appeared to be unfamiliar to the Government of Guyana respondents I interviewed. Moreover, the interviewee from the CARICOM Secretariat indicated that to the best of her knowledge there had been little intra-CARICOM follow-up on the document's implementation after it was discussed at a high-level UN summit in 2005. The same respondent indicated that "this was the last big project" initiated by the CARICOM Secretariat in relation to both gender and the MDGs. The respondent indicated that this was in part caused by the continued absence of a CARICOM gender specialist, whose post had been vacant for nearly a year and a half at the time of the interview -two issues which signal the lack of importance placed upon achieving substantive equality for women in Guyana and the broader Commonwealth Caribbean region.

Institutional Actions Initiated for the Achievement of MDG3

Out of all 19 interviews conducted, only one UN organization, UNICEF, alluded to direct actions initiated for the achievement of indicators of MDG3, in addition to their gender mainstreaming policies⁴⁴. The respondent did not immediately make the link between UNICEF's policies and MDG3, however.

⁴⁴ UNICEF, much as all of the UN, employs gender mainstreaming processes throughout all the policies and projects it employs to ensure that social conditions are favourable for children to get a good start in life. The UN's Economic and Social Council refers to gender mainstreaming as a process which entails

MB: I'm just wondering, has UNICEF put any MDG3 specific programs or policies in place?

R: No, but I think that in fact that we have a gender mark-up in our assessments and in our reporting system, it is there, it is mainstreamed, it has to be – we cannot escape it.

MB: But there is no specific program in place seeking to do something in terms of MDG3? It's just integrated across?

R: I can tell you in terms of education because we did help the Ministry in terms of... this was years ago... in terms of reviewing their text, making certain that we were ensuring that we start looking at policy. What is your policy for ensuring that girls continue learning, continue education?

The response provided here by the UNICEF representative appears to indicate that there may have initially been some work conducted to improve access to education for girls in relation to MDG3 indicators, but at the present time, improving gender equality is limited to processes of gender mainstreaming. Furthermore, UNICEF works in collaboration with the Ministry of Education and currently focuses on universal secondary education given that universal primary education is believed to have nearly been reached⁴⁵. However, because girls are now beginning to outnumber boys in primary and secondary education and comprise approximately 70% of tertiary level students (UNDP, 2011, p. 26), according to the respondent “the focus is on the boy child”.

ensuring that men's and women's concerns are addressed at all stages of policy and program development throughout all spheres of society, in order for men and women to benefit equally (UN ECOSOC, 1997). The ultimate goal of gender mainstreaming is gender equality, however the UN acknowledges that there is a need for “targeted interventions to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, particularly where there are glaring instances of persistent discrimination of women and inequality between women and men” (United Nations, 2013, n.p.). Therefore, in addition to the gender analysis applied at all levels of UN activity, there should be complimentary interventions in the form of programs and policies in order to improve major disparities in gender equality.

⁴⁵ Statistics on primary education enrollment are difficult to interpret because of the increased number of students enrolled in private schools, which have not been legislated to report enrollment data to the government (although this process is in motion). As a result, although in 2004 primary school enrollment was at 95.4%, as of 2009 this number appears to have dropped by 13%. Based on a number of surveys indicating that enrollment is at approximate 96%, the Government's position is such that the “vast majority of children in Guyana are accessing primary education” (UNDP, 2011, p. 18).

In terms of what we are doing this year and what we are going to do is I could tell you for education, we are looking at okay, we have gotten to universal primary education, UNICEF is looking at child friendly schools programming, are you making children want to learn? Are they learning in safe, healthy spaces? Is there active learning? Are you going child seeking? Don't tell us that you have so many drop-outs. We want to know where they are, why they have dropped out and how we can bring them back into school. So, for us, here is where the equity part of it comes in, the gender equity. So for example, the big thing for us now, you're telling us that you have universal secondary education, but your teen mothers, you have no system in place to have your teen mothers continue school, either during pregnancy or after pregnancy. So, where is the equity? Where is the gender equity? You know? But again for us, it's about being fair to all children and your boys are dropping out, they're going into gold mining or the heart of palm [industry], wherever. What is the school system doing for them? You know? We have to improve our game when it comes to technical and vocational education. We have to start finding alternative pathways, for children who may not be academically inclined.

The respondent from the Ministry of Education reiterated the sentiment that boys are currently the demographic in need of targeted interventions “certainly in Guyana and most of the Caribbean, the difficulty is not females, the difficulty is males” in relation to their representation in primary and secondary education. Moreover, this respondent asserted that gender analysis has a long history of integration within the Guyanese education system, and noted that “the MDGs gave a name to some of what we were doing, because these were concerns that people had all the time, at least for a long time, we’ve had projects that have focused on one sex or another. I’m not sure we’ve had them because of the MDGs”. However, the respondent did note that the gender related education targets of the MDGs are easily adhered to due to the monitoring and evaluation structure that has been put into place since the MDGs were implemented:

You see the MDGs when they were set up, in large part, UNESCO became responsible for the education indicators, and the information, the data collection agency, at UNESCO is UIS⁴⁶... Most countries that belong to the UN framework, the UNESCO framework, supply data to the UIS and the formats that they have and the questions that they ask require you, to put all your data-to have all your data in, with an eye to gender. So if you look at the questionnaires, the questionnaire will ask how many children you have in a particular way, and then it will ask how many boys, so all the time, there’s an eye to gender. When they ask later on when the curriculum changes, and people have choices in the subject areas, they will ask about participation by gender. Because we are responding

⁴⁶ Unesco Institute for Statistics

to that, our national framework has got to be done in such a way, that we can respond to those kinds of questions. So certainly for education, it has not been difficult for us to be able to keep our data, and to be able to respond to questions in that way.

Therefore the perception of the respondent is such that while there are currently no dedicated programs or policies in place for the achievement of MDG3, the monitoring and evaluation methods associated with the MDGs reinforce the existing attention the Ministry of Education has paid to issues of gender representation within the education system.

How the Education Indicator can Mislead

Of important note is that even if there is a direct connection between MDG3 and the gender related education initiatives that UNICEF and the Ministry of Education have been working toward, these initiatives are also part of broader interventions linked to MDG2, the goal seeking to achieve universal primary education. Attention to the gender parity indicator of MDG3 is therefore not necessarily indicative of any serious dedication to empowering women and girls, as the orientation of the Ministry of Education and UNICEF has shifted towards the reduced number of boys remaining enrolled in school. Instead, the emphasis of these policies is placed on children and youth as a whole, which, while laudable in and of itself, does little to address the systematic barriers which prevent the achievement of substantive gender equality. As addressed in Chapter Two, initiatives which focus on increasing access to education for girls and women, also have broader social and economic implications including greater productivity in the market and better health outcomes for the children of women with higher education levels. Because these outcomes have the potential to increase Guyana's economic growth, and the goal of increasing girls' access to education appears to already have been met (see Table 1, Chapter 1), it is unsurprising that attention is now being paid to increasing that access to boys.

Again, the problem this elucidates is that a shift in orientation to one gender over another will not address the systematic problems that keep both girls and boys out of school and

perpetuate gender inequality. Taking quantitative indicators, such as the education parity indicator at face value, thereby focusing on interventions seeking to maintain parity in representation, masks experiences. For example, the MDG report does not measure or discuss rates of illiteracy, the rate of school dropout or the qualification level for the population as a whole. The most recent census however indicates that as of 2002, 65.3% of males and 60.2% of females over the age of 15 in Region 4 had no educational qualification as measured by CARICOM through post-elementary qualification exams conducted between the ages of 12 and 17 (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 87)⁴⁷. Furthermore, an additional 7.7% of males and 8.2% of females (for an average of 8.1%) were considered dropouts in Region 4 (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 86). In spite of the fact that females have outperformed males in their representation at all educational levels, the slightly higher female dropout rate is likely attributable to teenage pregnancy and inadequate mechanisms and support to assist girls in the completion of their schooling after they give birth. Additionally, an accurate understanding of the literacy rate is unknown, as the way that it is generally measured is through a question on the census where the respondent must answer whether they can read and write. Beyond this being an insufficient mechanism for measuring literacy for the obvious reason of social desirability, this question was not asked on the 2002 census, and illiteracy was instead defined by proxy of completing less than a fourth grade education. By this measurement, 4.8% of males in Region 4 vs. 5% of females were considered to be illiterate (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 86). These data sets indicate that the academic outcomes for girls and boys are similar, however, what they do not speak to is the additional disadvantage these outcomes create for girls due to other structural barriers which perpetuate inequality.

These figures however are not valid indicators of illiteracy as the numbers do not account

⁴⁷ These tests include the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) exam and its predecessor which conferred a General Certificate of Education (GCE) to students.

for the numerous students who slip through the cracks and matriculate through the primary and even secondary system without being able to read or write (an experience which I was witness to in the student populations I taught from poor households during my two internships with Red Thread). Therefore, irrespective of gender, the contribution that these individuals can make towards their own lives and the fabric of Guyanese society, through the provision of essential and skilled services such as education, medicine, and infrastructure development, is seriously undermined due to such low qualification rates. Furthermore, women are at an additional disadvantage in terms of their access to employment, as again, in spite of equal or higher representation in education at all levels, men are twice as likely to be placed in a job as women resulting from institutionalized sexism which continues to exist in Guyana (Government of Guyana, 2011b, p. 9), and the additional burden of care work women shoulder. Therefore, in spite of the respondent's reference to the continuous 'focus on gender' whether it be on girls or boys, what this clearly equates to is a misplaced focus on numbers rather than the outcomes which these numbers have the capacity to produce.

Organizational Knowledge and Engagement with MDG3 Indicators

While the interviews uncovered that there was limited direct programming associated with the indicators of MDG3 throughout the 19 organizations interviewed, there also did not appear to be much substantive familiarity with MDG3. Only one respondent from the Delegation of the European Union (E.U.), appeared to have a clear understanding of all three indicators associated with MDG3. What is noteworthy here is that the Delegation of the E.U. does not integrate the MDGs into its mandate, while none of the representatives of 12 organizations which do formally subscribe to the MDGs appeared to have a clear working knowledge of MDG3's indicators. This included the representatives of all of nine agencies or departments which either deal with specific indicators of MDG3 (such as education), gender related issues, or work in some supervisory

capacity for such bodies. As mentioned earlier, the lack of awareness of MDG3's indicators at this level is problematic because it means that the framework is not being implemented in the way in which it was positioned to promote the meeting of top-down with bottom-up development approaches, and connecting grassroots citizens with the processes of development. However, the evident disengagement with the indicators of MDG3 by the respondents in the study is problematic for two further reasons. First, a funding relationship and partnership was recently fostered between UNICEF and the Government of Guyana for the achievement of MDG3, meaning that interventions around this goal should be in the pipeline. Second, Government Officials are publicly citing high levels of progress on MDG3 without any perceptible institutional engagement with the Goal.

Awareness of MDG3 Indicators and Tailored MDG3 Programs within the Government

Recent newspaper reports indicate that a US\$15.2 million project agreement was made between UNICEF and the Guyanese Government in March 2012 for the “progressive realization of children and women’s rights” (UNICEF signs US\$15.2M, 2012, ¶2). The program was to focus on “disparity reduction, elimination of inequities and enhancement of inclusiveness in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)” (UNICEF signs US\$15.2M, 2012, ¶2). Given the recency of the agreement and the significant monetary value attached to the project, it is noteworthy that there was not greater awareness of what the report referred to as “downstream support” relating to MDG3 by the respondents representing the gender arm of the government, the Ministry of Education, and representatives from the in-country offices of the United Nations, particularly UNICEF itself. The agreement was publicly reported in March 2012 and my interviews took place between June and August 2012, thus there could have been sufficient time for the respondents to have learned of the agreement.

‘Downstream support’ refers to “actual implementation in the ground (sic.) that has a direct impact on women and children in society” (Govt., UNICEF to take on children, 2012, ¶1). One would therefore presume that ‘downstream support’ would be within the jurisdiction of the organizations interviewed. None of the other respondents from within the UN Network or the gender and education bodies of the government made reference to this project agreement or noted any particular impacts of it on the activities of their respective organizations. Though it might be argued that the project is still in its “upstream” phase focusing on providing technical assistance and policy frameworks at higher levels of government, as noted in Appendix B, Table B4, all of the interview requests sought from within the legislative or executive branches of government, where respondents might have offered a clearer picture of the policy links to MDG3, were denied.

In the one government interview which was granted at the supervisory level, by a representative responsible for the Documentation Center, Women of Worth (WoW) Program, Guyana Women’s Leadership Institute (GWLII), and the Women’s Bureau, (colloquially termed the gender team), I was told that programs and policies *do* exist for MDG3, but that for clarification I should contact the program heads of the respective departments.

MB: So you are aware of the Millennium Development Goal 3? And you’re aware of the indicators? The specific indicators?

R: Yes, I am.

MB: So, would you say the indicators align with the Ministry’s approach to achieving or improving equality and empowering women?

R: As a matter of fact the work plans and work programs are sort of tailored to some extent around the indicators.

MB: Ok. And those, which are you referring to specifically?

R: Umm, I would really have to go back to my work, I can’t tell you offhand. But I know when we were planning it, I specifically spoke to the heads and came up with the programs. Because, as I said, there are 14 different departments and about 500 staff so it’s difficult to remember everything. If I refer to my work programs I’ll be able to tell you that but when you speak to the heads they should be able to tell you exactly what they do.

When I spoke to the program heads of the above noted departments however, most of them were unable to clearly identify this linkage. One respondent informed me that her knowledge of the MDG indicators was “vague” and that in relation to MDG3 achievement her organization plays only a supportive role through the provision of information. Another interviewee simply noted that gender equality is a cross cutting issue that must be taken up throughout all of the MDGs. When the same respondent was asked if there are any specific indicators which her department is responsible for achieving in relation to MDG3, the respondent made reference to a number of themes which have been either excluded from the MDGs all together, such as sexual and reproductive health, or relate to other Goals such as MDG4 pertaining to maternal mortality. While the broad scope reported by the respondent is laudable and necessary to support the achievement of substantive equality, the respondent did not address the indicators which comprise MDG3 itself either to make note of the work plans which the high-level representative quoted above alluded to, nor to critique the reductionist nature of MDG3, which she hinted to by indicating that to see MDG3 achieved, gender would have to be integrated across all of the Goals. This led me to believe that her knowledge of the Goal only went as far as understanding that it was a goal seeking to empower women and improve gender equality. Moreover, another respondent from the ‘gender team’ noted that she was aware of the MDG3 indicators “but they are not my bible” and when I fleshed them out over the course of our discussion, the respondent’s responses were such that the indicators of MDG3 had already been met, without referencing links between the indicators and thematically similar programs that the department she represents has in place. This underscores the fact that to the knowledge of these three respondents from the gender related bureaus within the government, there are no specific policies or programs dedicated to the achievement of the indicators of MDG3, and their knowledge of the indicators

themselves is limited, therefore engagement with grassroots citizens around MDG3 as a human rights issue is not taking place.

This lack of knowledge is problematic because as previously mentioned, even in their reductionist form as indicators of MDG3, achieving equal representation in non-agricultural employment and in national parliaments has not yet occurred, and since the governments signed the Millennium Declaration in a commitment to meet the MDGs by 2015, and is now linked with UNICEF in a US\$15.2 partnership, it is obliged to lead efforts towards the achievement of MDG3 in addition to the broader goal of promoting substantive gender equality and women's empowerment. Instead, MDG3 appears to exist in the parlance of these government departments as a buzzword, yet without any actionable or intellectual engagement (positive or negative) with its content.

However, the information provided during the interview with yet another representative from the 'gender team' *did* speak to the tailored work plans around the MDGs to which the high-level government interviewee, quoted earlier, had made reference. The WoW or Women of Worth Program is a microcredit scheme providing small loans to women facilitated through the Ministry of Labour and Human Services and Social Security (MLHSS) and funded by the Guyana Bank of Trade and Industry (GBTI). It turned out that the tailored work plan the high-level representative was referring to in the earlier quote was the WoW program itself, but the respondent from WoW made it clear that this programming was designed primarily around MDG1, the goal seeking to eradicate extreme poverty, while parallels could be drawn to MDG3:

MB: Ok, so you heard about the MDGs while you were completing your studies, and what about formally through the Ministry [government]]?

R: Hmmm.. no.

MB: No? You haven't heard about them?

R: No. Well we would make references because when we were doing up our work plan and so on, we have to submit -there are certain things that we have to speak to. And so

it's understood that listen you should know what MDG's are as it relates to your particular unit or department. But um, me along with my bosses -when I submit, we would sit and work together. But he's responsible really overall for doing the budget and doing the work plans and so on. But yes, every department has to speak to whatever it is that you're doing in relation to fulfilling the MDGs.

MB: The MDGs?

R: Yes

MB: Ok.. um, can you speak to which Goals the micro-credit program is supposed to be referencing?

R: I know, reducing the poverty levels. That was the basic one that formed this. Because remember it's poverty reduction and our female single parents are really, really there. So we're trying to get them out of that, right? So the poverty levels and um.. (pause) that's basically what we spoke about. But a lot of things would have come up because we're talking about women being empowered and -but so is poverty levels being reduced.

Based on this excerpt it would appear that it is up to the high-level representatives in the government to tailor the work plans around the MDGs, and filter them down to various departments. While it seems that this occurred within this particular department of the gender team to which this respondent belongs, it was tailored around MDG1, with links to economic empowerment, through the facilitation of income generation. The multidimensional aspect of gender inequality that MDG3 seeks to address did not have cognate work plans tailored around them, at least not to the knowledge of my respondents. This highlights the continued primacy given to women's market inclusion as a form of poverty reduction and women's empowerment, irrespective of the positioning of the MDGs to be an approach that prioritizes Human Development and human rights.

Keeping in mind that these organizations and departments have a history which precedes the MDGs, and therefore existing programs and policies cannot just be stopped when a new development framework is implemented, the lack of prominence of MDG3 within the language and day to day work of the organizations interviewed, should not necessarily be attributed to a lack of attention to the issues subsumed under MDG3. It is perhaps more indicative of a lack of

formal linkage between the indicators of MDG3, and programs and policies with a long-standing existence. However, in the day-to-day activities of these organizations, rather than being viewed as a framework around which to either design policies to promote the achievement of MDG3 targets and indicators, or one to which existing gender policies and programs can be linked in order to strengthen commitments to their realization, what this set of interviews appears to have uncovered is that the MDGs are seen as a monitoring and evaluation tool, and at best operate to reinforce what the organizations have already been doing.

MB: Ok, so as far as what I understand from this discussion, there are no specific MDG projects because you play a supportive role?

R: [Yes, we play a] supportive role. For all the areas based on the indicators, we actually have to make an input when the report is done.

And...

R: When they're [the government] doing the [MDG] reports of course they're going to ask questions pertaining to women and so we'll have to speak to that. If programs are so designed for women.

In other words, 13 years after its implementation, and three MDG Reports later, MDG3 does not appear to be offering anything novel to the existing development agenda within the Guyanese context. However, given its recency it can only be hoped that funding and dedicated MDG3 initiatives from the US\$15.2 million project agreement between UNICEF and the Guyanese Government will eventually trickle down through a bureaucracy which is obviously slow to change, and galvanize substantive efforts towards meeting MDG3 and promoting *de facto* women's empowerment.

Paying Lip Service to MDG3?

The lack of connection between existing policies and the MDG framework cannot be blamed on the respondents themselves, but may rather be indicative of weak institutional mechanisms for promoting the MDGs particularly in areas, such as MDG3, where a high level of

achievement is being advertised to exist. A further issue which comprises the second reason why it is of concern that greater meso-level engagement with MDG3 does not appear to be occurring within the organizations from which respondents were interviewed (particularly those from within government departments) is that during a number of public events over the course of the last decade, government officials including the President, Prime Minister and the Minister of Labour and Human Services and Social Security have made statements such as “We have made considerable progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals, in particular goal three on ‘promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women’” (GINA, 2013, ¶7).

Given the limited action and engagement with MDG3 that appears to be occurring at the institutional level in Guyana, it would appear that the MDG3 is indeed being used as a buzzword to create the appearance of action and engagement on the issue of gender equality and women’s empowerment. Lip service is being paid to MDG3⁴⁸ without direct meso-level engagement with its indicators within the bodies and organizations which would most likely be responsible for promoting their achievement and sharing information about the MDGs with the public. As evidenced by this lack of institutional attention, the high level of achievement advertised by government officials on the indicators of the Goal, may in effect be deemphasizing the need for sustained attention to the indicators of MDG3 within these organization, or for interventions which apply a careful analysis of gender relations, and thereby would have the potential to do more for improving the lives of women and poor women in particular. As a result, these political one-liners allude to progress, however without meaningful changes having occurred in women’s lives. These issues will be considered in detail in Chapter Six when the relevance of MDG3 for grassroots women is elaborated. However, as far as the indicators of MDG3 are concerned, as discussed in Chapter One, gender parity in education has existed in Guyana since the mid 1990s

⁴⁸ For other examples see: Guyana making strides, 2013; Guyana doing best, 2012; Guyana observes International, 2009.

prior to the implementation of the MDGs, and there is even some evidence of regression on the employment indicator which will be discussed further in the following chapter (see Table 5, Chapter 6). As a result, irrespective of the rhetoric coming from the government and the MDG reports indicating that Guyana is on track to meeting MDG3, it cannot be said that women are empowered and experience gender equality. Quantitative indicators can only show how women and girls are doing in terms of gender parity, not substantive equality. Although the indicators of MDG3 are important Goals in themselves, in a context such as Guyana where achievements on these indicators have been relatively high for many years, they are not sufficient to address the full scope of issues that perpetuate women's disadvantage. Furthermore, if their importance is overstated, as tends to be the case when measures are advertised publicly, they can hide other statistics and qualitative experiences, which show that women's progress in terms of social and economic outcomes has been meagre. This point was reinforced by one of the respondents from Red Thread, the grassroots women's organization interviewed:

So, you know my overall thing is that dealing with gender empowerment as a question of numbers does not work. There may be, and I'm sure there is a certain value in societies in which numbers are appalling. To say yes more girls must go to school and so on and so forth. But then you stick there. You stick at the numbers and nothing else. And then people try to say things like you know, you have to have a critical mass, and that is not true either. That has not been true. So, the limitation of the MDG's is that that's what it's about. It's about quantitative, improvement, sometimes hoping that there will also be qualitative improvement but it's never about transformation. And there's no such thing as gender empowerment without transformation. At the fundamental level it's not there.

Although the MDGs were publicized to be a framework that promotes the development of 'human capabilities' and attention to Human Development and human rights, the respondent from Red Thread quite rightly argues that the MDGs have been about quantitative improvements rather than social transformation. As the discussion pertains to MDG3, we saw through the organizational interviews that in Guyana, the approach to achieving the Goal does not measure up as the novel development framework seeing to connect grassroots citizens to the processes of

development. Therefore the implementation of the MDG framework, not to mention its outcomes could in no way be considered transformatory.

Thus, if the only additional outcomes of MDG3's integration into Guyana's development plan include a) the creation of the WoW program (for which the micro loans are funded by the Guyana Bank of Trade and Industry, thus too much credit for it should not be given to the MDGs); b) the initiatives with said links to MDG3 from within UNICEF and the Ministry of Education mentioned in the previous sections, and c) progress reporting on the MDGs, as noted by these respondents, it could not be said that the MDGs have facilitated the promotion of social justice and substantive equality. Also of concern, is that the emphasis on these quantitative indicators may be doing more harm than good, as there is already some indication of attention moving away from girls and women on account of decreases on education indicators for boys. Because boys are now underrepresented and underperforming in comparison to their female counterparts on the education parity indicator of MDG3, targeted interventions are now being directed at boys without seriously addressing the inequalities that may be perpetuated through the curriculum and formal education, nor at the differential employment, earning or status outcomes which face girls when they matriculate. As Kabeer (2005a) notes "[The MDGs] have served to reduce the visions and aspirations of a movement into a series of narrow and technically conceived targets" (p. 5). Much in the same vein, the way that MDG3 has been taken up institutionally in Guyana, does not appear to be galvanizing efforts towards meaningful gender equality and empowerment for women.

A Disempowering Environment for Women's Empowerment

As noted in Chapter One, on account of women's high levels of representation in education, non-agricultural employment, and in parliaments and perhaps because of the publicity given to MDG3 achievements within the media in Guyana (as distinct from publicity around the Goals meant for public engagement), the perception that gender inequality is no longer a major problem in the Guyanese context is not uncommon. An example which stood out clearly, is the response received from the National Working Group on the MDGs, a small organization which was established and funded by the UNDP in order to integrate the private sector into MDG achievement initiatives. The respondent described the purpose of the organization as follows:

The National working group was set up in 2005... as I understand it is to encourage partnerships with the private sector and the government in terms of achieving the MDGs. We have limited resources, so we have been concentrating on a few of the MDGs... one being the extreme poverty goal... the other one would be for providing access to women and women's groups outside of urban Guyana, because in the NWG we try to focus on issues that gets left out of the development process, and also pockets of poverty, because we think if you concentrate on the pockets of poverty, you are going to lift the overall rate of poverty in Guyana... so that's where we concentrate our efforts. They are really small interventions, and they are really designed to get communities to invest in themselves.

However, when asked if the respondent was aware of the indicators of MDG3, the respondent answered that "the NWG has not done any work in that area because it is felt that in Guyana we have achieved most of that", which is in stark contradiction to US\$15.2 million agreement between UNICEF and the government to bolster the "progressive realization of children and women's rights" (UNICEF signs US\$15.2M, 2012, ¶2). Although gender parity has been achieved in primary and secondary education, and women's representation in politics is very high compared to many other parts of the developing world including the Anglophone Caribbean⁴⁹ where Guyana ranks second only to Grenada, parity has not yet been achieved, nor

⁴⁹ As of 2013 the following proportion of women held seats in National Parliaments in the twelve countries of the Anglophone Caribbean: Belize 3.1%; Saint Kitts and Nevis 6.7%; Antigua and Barbuda

has it been achieved in terms of women's share of non-agricultural employment, an area which constitutes a major focus of the NWGs work⁵⁰.

R: In terms of women's rights, in terms of women's representation in parliament...ummm I know their representation in the upper echelons of the public service... I think there may be 4 women permanent secretaries... and because we feel we are on track to achieving that goal, we would focus on gaps and issues that would not normally be addressed in development.. economic [development]..

MB: It's interesting that you say that because earlier, you mentioned that part of the mandate of the organization is to also provide access to women in terms of employment, correct?

R: Yes

MB: Because that's one of the indicators of MDG3, to increase women's participation in non-agricultural employment. So I was just wondering if there were any specific initiatives that the NWG is working towards to help increase women's participation?

R: I could best give you an example. Because you know, the question that they ask at the census, is that do you work or not, and depending on your answer you are classified. Now if a Guyanese woman rears crops and livestock and she sells at home to the market, she would answer negative to that question, so she would be reflected as being unemployed, when in fact she may be engaging in some form of economic activity in order to supplement the household income. Be that as it may, it is a fact that Guyana has a lower labour participation rate of women in the work force, but that isn't because they aren't working, it's because of how the question is asked. And a project that we have that seeks to address some of that is a project at Kuru Kuru crop and livestock association that have their operations in Kuru Kuru along the Linden Soesdike highway..... The NWG assisted them by providing equipment and training in order to enhance the production and technical capacity in terms of producing honey..... Most of the people who are engaged in the Kuru Kuru livestock bee production, are women. And that's a side income, they're at home and engage in other activities, and rear bees as an alternative stream of income. SO that's how we think we can address women's participation in economic production, livelihood.

...

10.5%; Dominica 12.5%; Jamaica 12.7%; Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 13%; Bahamas 13.2%; Barbados 16.7%; Saint Lucia 16.7%; Trinidad and Tobago 28.6%; Guyana 31.3%; Grenada 33.3%;

⁵⁰ While much of the NWGs focus is on creating commercial relationships between rural producers and private enterprises, two major projects in which rural women are involved are in the production of food-stuffs such as honey and peanut butter. Because this activity involves manufacturing, it is subsumed within the industrial sector, which is integrated into the monetary economy, and falls under the umbrella of non-agricultural employment. The respondent indicated that 60%-70% of the beneficiaries of these projects are women.

led approach to development prevalent in Guyana, and the type of environment in which the achievement of gender equality is accorded a low priority.

Another troubling finding relates to high-level disengagement with the MDGs and women's issues more broadly. CARICOM is the supra-national governing body, seeking to integrate 15 Caribbean countries and dependencies into a single market and economy. Its primary purpose is to streamline economic and foreign policy and promote cooperation across the member states in order to improve "the quality of life of the People of the Community and the development of an innovative and productive society" (CARICOM, 2011, n.p.). The CARICOM Secretariat is located in Georgetown, and the respondent from the organization emphasized that the CARICOM Single Market and Economy (CSME) must not be viewed solely as a trade institution, although the ministers and heads do tend to give more emphasis to trade. The respondent noted that "We have missed the point totally if you think its only about trade" because "it is people who are going to make this community work". The respondent urged that equal value needs to be placed upon the work of the directorate responsible for human and social development (the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD)), to which the respondent is assigned, because CARICOM is in place to improve the lives of member country citizens.

However, as previously noted, the respondent indicated that the organization's gender post had been vacant for approximately 18 months at the time of writing, and the person in that post was also responsible for child protection and the MDGs. The respondent alluded to the low institutional importance placed upon the areas covered by the gender specialist post, on account of its longstanding vacancy.

Well I should probably say first, as you gathered in one of your first questions was the situation with the Gender Specialist Post being vacant, which is a critical context for this interview. The fact that the post is vacant, our gender post -not only is there gender, they

program funded. So really since [the individual in the gender post] left, basically nothing has happened in this area.

Also troubling however, is that because of the low institutional importance placed on filling the gender and MDG post, the issues covered by this position are not being brought up at COSHOD's ministerial meetings, and therefore there is a disconnect in information sharing, which creates an environment where there is little pressure for national governments to take gender related issues and the MDGs seriously:

R: Within here [COHSOD] we have culture, health, sports, education, gender. Right. All of the social sectors are in here, and we have two COSHODs a year... but when our COSHODs meet, is it going to be of ministers of sport, of health, of education, or of gender?? So what we do is we combine. We have a COSHOD on culture and education, or culture youth and sport. Otherwise it would take so long to rotate through them all. So it also means that our ministers don't meet us as often as we would like, and so we are always complaining about the other two [directorates] and how they get to meet more frequently than ours do. So those who have said that it isn't a problem say that we should be dealing with social sector issues in an integrated fashion. So it makes sense to do a combined meeting. It works and it doesn't work. Maybe what we probably need to do sometimes, is if there is something happening in a particular area that you will just need those ministers to meet and not with anybody else. So, I went through that long explanation to say, because we don't have a gender specialist, it means that it's difficult to convene a meeting of ministers responsible for gender, because someone needs to prepare all the technical papers, someone following all of the issues regionally.... To put the agenda together... To put together what we call a working document for every meeting... Somebody has to prepare these papers.. put the agenda together... lead the process.

Me: So in other words there hasn't been a meeting on gender in the last 18 months or more?

R: Exactly, Exactly... Which is why we made a special effort last week to have the gender advocate present her report to that meeting on youth and children... but it wasn't the ideal COSHOD for her. The ministers responsible for gender weren't necessarily there. Only to the extent that in some member states you have a minister responsible for youth, culture *and* gender [together]. So a gender minister may have been there, but that wasn't the focus of the meeting. But we did that to facilitate the process anyway. So there's a real gap. It's going to be really difficult until that post is filled to have a meeting on gender specifically because we don't have that person to drive the process. So it's, you know, we really have to continue push for the filling of that post... I don't know how successful we will be. But at the same time, we would have had a look at the MDGs in that context.

In an institutional environment which currently appears to be apathetic to interventions seeking the promotion of women's empowerment, one meaningful intervention which may have been overshadowed by funded projects, and has likely been overlooked as a result of the lack of gender based COHSOD meetings, includes the implementation of the regionally specific set of MDG targets and indicators that the former Gender Specialist had worked on with UNIFEM. This document includes indicators disaggregated by gender throughout all of the Goals, a target for sexual and reproductive rights, and targets and indicators on domestic and sexual violence (UNIFEM, 2005). This document, as noted earlier, was not well known within the government offices interviewed. While it is still premised around quantitative indicators and Goals (a feature which should be appealing to the government and the UN bodies) it offers perhaps the best opportunity to incite meaningful change, as far as is possible within a quantitative goal oriented framework. It is specific to the Anglophone Caribbean context, includes some of the most glaring omissions of MDG3 more in line with the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA), and pays more significant attention to addressing gender based violence and sexual and reproductive rights. If there were political will to formally implement this re-envisioned set of MDGs within Guyana or the broader Anglophone Caribbean, perhaps more public importance would be accorded to the issues which seem to be disempowering Guyanese women, issues that emerge from grassroots discussions which are the focus of the next chapter.

Two such issues include the risk of sexual and domestic violence, and safe, meaningful and fairly remunerated employment either within or outside of the home. At the present time, these issues continue to disproportionately plague the lives of poor women, and those organizations whose primary mandate is to support grassroots women either through services or advocacy, including Red Thread, Women across Differences and Help and Shelter, very much feel the effects of an environment structured by growth led development approaches that frame gender

equality along Sardenberg's (2008) 'liberalising' rather than 'liberating' lines. This environment is what creates a sense of 'tunnel vision', publicly focusing on the achievement of the MDG3 (while no attention is actually even directed towards the Goals), with no systematic or coordinated efforts within the government or larger development institutions to address some of the issues facing women that are more challenging to solve.

Reduced funding for civil society organizations is one major effect of this environment which has a detrimental impact on the NGOs and women's organizations that play an important role in advocacy and service provision. The respondent from Women Across Differences indicated that the organization does not receive a government subvention, nor does it have sufficient funding to extend many of its services beyond Region 4. The respondent also noted the inattention to political issues which have been established as linked to women's disadvantage, but have lacked any real action:

I think it's a lot of talking about it, I think we leave a lot of action as it relates to gender equality. Because yes, we say equal opportunities. We say women must be paid for work at home and we say all of that. Can we really enforce that? There is a lot of advocacy and protests, and all of that. But is that really gender equality, or are we still just talking about it? We need some more action.

This appears to indicate that awareness around some of the systematic barriers to women's empowerment are known and publicized through advocacy work, but there is little political will to address the issues. Substantive solutions, such as paid domestic care work, are fundamentally incongruent with economic policies which promote privatization and the reduction of the public sector to meet macro-economic ends. It is then, for this reason, that a framework such as the MDGs fits well within a liberalized economy such as Guyana's because it does not question the fundamental causes of inequality. As such however, it delimits the scope of possible interventions for the promotion of gender equality and women's empowerment because in its enormity as a framework it occupies the space where a multiplicity of voices would otherwise be heard.

The respondent from Red Thread emphasised this sentiment in discussing their hesitation to frame themselves as an NGO and the limited funding they have received over the years because their approach to empowering women does not fit conventional structure of service provision and advocacy:

I don't think we call ourselves anything. I don't know, it's more that what we have chosen to try to be a core of building a women's movement in Guyana, and in association with women in other parts of the world. Why would you want to be a movement rather than an NGO? Ah- because NGO's assume the world as it is. And, they want to make some improvements in the world as it is. And they want to produce services for people that they would identify as all kinds of language that I hate – vulnerable, needy and so on. That's what, that's what an NGO does. But try to work towards a world in which there's no such words as needy and vulnerable and so on. You know, [we] don't assume the power relations of the world as being correct or as being inevitable.

Furthermore, Help and Shelter noted that even while there has been significant recognition by the government around the need to address domestic violence, the funding to support programs in their entire capacity is not there, particularly around interventions that have the potential to address the causes of gender-based violence rather than just the symptoms:

R: Yes. The organization received a medal of service for the work that we've been doing. As I mentioned we are the only organization that has a shelter for women in Guyana right now. There is a lot more to be done in terms of more shelters for women. I could safely say this because there is a call for us. Wherever we go to work in the regions, people want us there. People want us to set up office in the region and we don't have the capacity to do that. And over the years this has been a real challenge for us to finance.... And so, the challenges are great for us. We would hope that... I don't know... some miracle happens for us to more or less deal with this whole financial constraint we are faced with. That is one of our major challenges.

MB: Is there any reason you could suggest as to why the funding is tightening?

R: I should think it's because the funding is drying up... I think also that we need to... the organization itself needs to be more realistic in terms of what is happening out there and we need to do something major to sustain ourselves. Because the bottom line is.. is doing funding, depending on donors, year after year, year after year, same source of funding... I think it becomes, you know [redundant for the donors].

Once the government signs on to these various UN conventions, they have an obligation to support NGOs. To assist in doing the work that they're doing. We're doing a lot of work with the ministries, education, human services, health... right... You know we are doing a lot of work...and I think it's time... even though we've gained recognition... I

think its time for them to see that the recognition is more or less to finance the organization to do its entire program.

What all of these interviews appear to elucidate is that the environment which neoliberal economic policies create serve to structure the thinking of both citizens and governments in a way which narrows the world of possibility to technocratic, outcome based interventions which cannot substantively address inequality in any of its permutations. As a result, the MDGs serve as a technical solution within the Guyanese context, without addressing anything novel for the empowerment of women and girls.

Conclusion

Overall, it seems that MDG3 has little institutional relevance at the level of development policy documents, nor for the integration of MDG3 into the mandates or work plans of government offices, UN agencies and NGOs. These findings suggest that MDG3 does not contribute anything novel or transformatory to the existing framework for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment in Guyana as focusing on MDG3's three indicators sets a benchmark which is too low and unsophisticated for a country which had already made significant gains on the indicators of MDG3, even prior to the implementation of the MDG framework. What needs to be emphasized is that high levels of representation by women do not equate to equality. However, because women's empowerment and gender equality are being reduced to quantifiable targets and indicators which compare favourably to other countries in the global South, there is a risk that the attainment of the targets and indicators will be perceived as the "end of development" (Akram-Lodhi, 2010, p. 75) without substantively empowering women or facilitating social justice. This operates to the great detriment of poor women, as irrespective of the MDG3 achievements publicized, my grassroots respondents outlined numerous challenges have not been addressed by the MDGs.

Chapter 6: The Relevance of MDG3 for Grassroots Women

The previous chapter looked at the relevance of MDG3 at the institutional level by examining the extent to which it is being addressed through policies and programs, and the work of the government, development organizations and NGOs operating nationally. Whether there is institutional attention being paid to MDG3 or not, improvements on the indicators are being publicly reported through the MDG reports and various news sources, thus the presumption would be such that these achievements would have some meaning for grassroots women. As one subset of stakeholders that the MDGs purport to target, this chapter will focus on the lived experiences of grassroots women, and the relevance, if any, that MDG3, the goal seeking to “Promote Gender Equality and Empower Women”, has on their lives. This chapter is based on 12 interviews with women in Georgetown.

An analysis of the respondents’ narratives uncovers the fact that their knowledge of the MDGs is limited, but more importantly, that the targets and indicators of MDG3 do not sufficiently address the many issues grassroots women face. Moreover, making a case through their social and economic experiences, this chapter argues that grassroots women are qualitatively disempowered, in spite of the rhetoric asserting that women’s high rates of achievement on quantitative indicators of MDG3 have contributed to “Guyana making strides in gender equality” (Guyana making strides, 2013, ¶1). The first part of the chapter will outline how respondents experience gender inequality and continue to be disempowered. The second part of the chapter addresses how achievement on the indicators of MDG3 which might appear to signal improvements in women’s lives, mask underlying experiences with the issues that are said to be being addressed by MDG3.

Liberalising vs. Liberating Empowerment in the Context of Women's Lives

Above, I noted that the data from this research suggest that the 12 women in the study are “qualitatively disempowered” in the liberating sense. Before I go on to explain why this appears to be the case, the term ‘disempowered’ must be understood as distinct from lacking ‘agency’ or ‘coping systems’. By drawing upon available resources and participating in various activities to reduce vulnerability, women appear to exercise considerable agency through their ability to cope in an inherently disempowering social and economic environment. The women I interviewed were shrewd managers of time and resources, and while constrained by patriarchal ideology and the limits of their monthly employment incomes which ranged between GYD\$12,000 and GYD\$60,000⁵², all of the women found ways, albeit varied, to meet at least the most basic needs of their families. Moreover, while all of my respondents recognized and lamented the challenges that they face day to day, none of them portrayed themselves as victims unable to negotiate their difficult life circumstances, rather all of them were actively hopeful that their efforts would eventually bring them a better life. However, as I highlighted in Chapter Two, there is a distinction between ‘liberating’ empowerment and ‘liberalising’ empowerment (Sardenberg, 2008). According to Kabeer (2005b) truly liberating empowerment requires the assertion of one’s agency in order to exercise choice in a way that also challenges power relations (p. 14). This is because activities that may appear otherwise empowering could in fact operate to reinforce systems of power, which reproduce inequality and contribute to women’s secondary status and unequal time burden (Kabeer, 1999). However, the productive struggles in which the grassroots respondents were engaged, and through which they provided their families with their material needs, were more likely to reinforce their relationship to a “liberalizing” form of empowerment

⁵² At the time of writing (July, 2013), US\$1 = GYD\$204

(if it can be called empowerment at all) than to expanding their ability to make “strategic life choices in a context where this ability was previously denied to them” (Kabeer, 1999, p. 437).

First and foremost, this is because the women that I interviewed shoulder the burden of childcare responsibilities of not only their own children, but also in many cases the children of their extended family or partners, in addition to juggling the burden of income earning activities. Irrespective of race, none of my respondents were employed exclusively in the home conducting only care work, with the exception of one woman providing ‘round-the-clock remunerated childcare for her two granddaughters⁵³. Therefore each one of my respondents worked for money in some capacity or another inside or outside of the home (see Appendix B, Table B5). The income earning activities of most of the respondents, particularly those working as entrepreneurs or in the informal sector⁵⁴, were flexible in nature allowing them to concomitantly engage in paid and domestic work. The data from the women’s narratives strongly suggest that their ability to engage in economic activities has produced for them meagre financial benefit, at the expense of their time and health. On average, the respondents in the study worked 6-7 days per week, working sixteen hours per day (and often longer) between domestic and care work responsibilities, and remunerated labour. Each of the women interviewed described some variation of the daily routine of the following respondent who owns a shop with her husband. Together they have three children all of whom live with them, and the shop is located a few blocks away from their home:

⁵³ One of my respondents stayed at home caring for two of her grandchildren while being supported by her two daughters who went to work odd jobs, including retail and factory work, on the neighbouring island of Trinidad. The respondent’s domestic labour freed up the time burden of care work for her daughter’s who were able to send remittances home for the cost of household maintenance and raising two children under the age of 3.

⁵⁴ These activities included housekeeping, early daytime or late night janitorial work, self-directed piecework and street vending.

Natasha: My day starts sometimes at 5, sometimes at 6, depends. I would get up. Get myself ready. Then I prepare lunch for them [teenage son and husband], the two others [adult children] to carry to work, every day.

MB: What kinds of things would you cook?

Natasha: Depends, I would do chow-mein, macaroni, sometimes, roti and curry, sometimes bake and salt fish, depends every day I would do [something different]. Hotdog, sausage... not every day they would want heavy stuff.... That is the morning...

MB: How long does it take you to cook?

Natasha: Like... sometimes hour, hour and a half, because the girl, she needs to reach for 8:30. The boys reach.... Like 9 the shop open, and they reach before that. That's the first part, then when everybody gone off, I would start the household chores, cleaning up the kitchen, packin' up the bedroom, liftin' up the beds, sweep out. Then it's around 11, [I would] set up the clothes to wash... I don't wash every day, but just set up the clothes... Sometimes as you're washin' then you gotta put on the food for lunch.

MB: For you and your husband?

Natasha: Yes... but I's make one cook, so when they come home [the children], like now, there would be food for them.... But I just did the rice, the stew ain't finish yet... I have to go back and do the stew.

MB: I am sorry to be keeping you.

Natasha: And umm... some days I don't get to start the lunch because I's do the buying [of merchandise] for most of the shop. I left today. This morning I had to go, I just left everything, I just tidy up the front, I had to go upstairs and sweep, and I had to get the drinks for the girls and so. And then I had to go straight to the shop, because he [my husband] applied for a liquor license, and he had to go for the interview so when he come back, I went home, tried to tidy up as much as possible, go to town, get some stuff and then come here to deal with you. That's like today. Every day is the same.

MB: And you would have some other obligation if you weren't dealing with me?

Natasha: Yes, because when I finish here I still have to go back to the shop. I have to go home and cook the stew, and sometimes I would go buy bread, or I would send my son to pick up the bread at the shop.

MB: And that is to sell?

Natasha: To sell, to sell. And when I finish cooking, I would carry down the food [to the shop]. And we stay down there 'til we close. And we ain't really got a time. It's when the last customer leave that we lock up.

MB: And on an average night, what time would you lock up? 11, 12, 1??

Natasha: 11, 12 [sarcasm]? 1 or 2 every morning sometimes!!

MB: So you are there, or your husband is there into the night?

Natasha: Both of us are there.

MB: And then you go home?

Natasha: Yes -and some nights I can't sleep right away. Sometimes I need to bathe and watch TV and then I's feel sleepy.

MB: How many hours per night on average do you sleep?

Natasha: Well usually I go to bed at 1-1:30 and I get up at 5am

MB: So it's usually 3-4 hours?

Natasha: Every night.

MB: What about the weekends? You can catch up on your sleep a little then?

Natasha: Umm. No. Friday and Saturday and Sunday we do the most business at the shop.

MB: You must be tired all the time.

Natasha: All the time, I's keep going like this all the time.

This excerpt underscores Sardenberg's contention that the integration of women into labour markets has facilitated "transforming poor women into poor entrepreneurs" (Sardenberg, 2008, p. 21), and paints a picture of a continuous cycle of daily struggle with little or no reprieve. Even the activities which Natasha conducts in the hours which could potentially be used for leisure prior to meeting her husband at their store, are plagued by errands or meetings, such as the one she had to attend for our interview.

Moreover, although not all of my respondents reported their monthly incomes to me, the upper limit of those who did, did not exceed GYD\$60,000⁵⁵. This is *employment* income earned

⁵⁵ Each respondent's situation varied significantly in terms of degree of dependence on unpaid resources or sources of income other than their own employment income. Some respondents had rents paid and had to pay all other costs on their own, others had extended family members who took care of the bills except food and daily household maintenance costs, and still others had no other sources of income or unpaid resources to rely on, and depended on their income alone to cover everything including rent. Attaching monetary value to all unpaid resources that respondents draw on, and calculating their various streams of income while deducting business operating costs and transportation to get an exact value of

and does not always account for transportation, expenses relating to business if women were entrepreneurs. This also does not account for other forms of income such as remittances or free products or services rendered in exchange for other services, nor for costs and bills covered by other family members, cohabiters or co-owners of businesses. Even in those cases where respondents had housing situations in which they did not have to pay rent⁵⁶, the most basic food items needed for survival for an average family of six (excluding any vegetables or meat proteins) cost GYD\$9472 as of 2007 (see Table 4). This brings into question the extent to which women can really become financially (or otherwise) independent through their integration into waged labour, if even those women earning the upper limits of the income range⁵⁷ they reported would scarcely be able to provide those basic food items in conjunction with the costs of shelter, transportation, water, electricity, kerosene, cell phone credit, children's school fees, books, uniforms and clothing.

each respondent's net income is a research project in itself. This would require in depth interviews exclusively on this topic and reviews of financial records (which may or may not exist) going back at least one year. As a result, as mentioned elsewhere in this chapter, income at face value is not a good indicator of wellbeing. *However, in relation to the point being made here, these figures provide a sense of the financial contribution range which grassroots women's remunerated labour is capable of producing.*

⁵⁶ The cost of rent for a 2 bedroom apartment in Georgetown in the areas nearby to where my respondent pool was recruited ranged from GYD\$20,000 in very poor and often unsafe neighbourhoods, to \$60,000 in lower-middle class areas. As an anecdote to give a sense of the cost of housing in Georgetown, the two bedroom apartment I was living in during my internship and research was on the outskirts of a lower-middle class neighbourhood called Kitty but bordered an upper middle class incorporated community. While the apartment came furnished, included wifi and was otherwise very clean and comfortable, it was located directly next to an abandoned shack occupied by squatters, it did not have hot water or central air and had serious plumbing problems. It was rented out to myself and my roommate for GYD\$120,000 for which we were both very grateful as other comparable housing options were located in upper-middle class or affluent neighbourhoods and were being rented out for nearly double the cost.

⁵⁷ The women earning the upper limits of the income range were those employed in the formal economy. The respondents whose monthly incomes were between \$45,000- \$60,000 included a veteran hospital custodian, a nurse newly entering the trade, and a produce vendor at Bourda market.

Table 4: Basic Food Items for a Family of Six (average size) for one Month (GYD\$)
(approx. GYD\$182 for US\$1 in 2007)

Items	Price in March 2007
6 pts oil	\$1,098
50 lbs flour	\$2,842
25 lb sugar	\$1,050
4 lbs loose milk	\$1,440
3lbs margarine	\$ 720
4 lbs salt	\$ 112
2 pts channa	\$ 360
½ bag brown rice	\$1,850
TOTAL	\$9,472

Source: Red Thread, 2007

One respondent who has nine children with her husband moved out of town in order to own her own home. While her gross monthly income (approximately, \$118,000- \$138,000) from vending at the local market is comparatively high in relation to the other respondents who reported their incomes in the study (though again, this cannot be taken at face value) the respondent's transportation costs alone account for nearly 60%-70% of her earnings leaving GYD\$40,000 - GYD\$60,000 to add to her husbands GYD\$100,000 - GYD\$120,000 income in order to support the eleven person household per month.

MB: So can I ask, why are you living in Parfaith? Is the rent cheaper?

Marisa: I was livin' in Georgetown, when I take my husband and I get my first son I was livin' at my mom, I had to move out. And when I move out, for 10 years we had to pay rent \$35,000 a month and we apply to the Ministry of Housing for a piece of land, and we get the land over there, so we build we own house and we living over there

MB: Can I ask you how much transport costs you?

Marisa: In all [round trip] like \$2600. The bus in the mornin' is \$1100 and the taxi home is \$1500.

MB: And how long does it take you to come in to work?

Marisa: Depends. Sometimes like half hour, three-quarter hour but if the road clear like on Saturday or Sunday, like 15 minutes.

MB: How long you been working here?

Marisa: Like 25 years.

MB: So your parents used to own this?

Marisa :Yes

MB: So do you have to pay rent for the stand?

Marisa: Yes... they call it a cleansing fee 33-40 per month, \$3340 per month.

MB: Do you mind me asking you how much you make in a month?

Marisa: Depends. Sometimes is be good, sometimes is be bad. Good times we make 60,000 and the bad times, we make 40-45.... That doesn't include the passage and so.

MB: And how many days per week do you work?

Marisa: Monday to Sunday.

MB: You never take a day off?

Marisa: Never.

Marisa's example is particularly disheartening because her hours spent in transit and waged labour, significantly reduce the number of quality hours she is able to spend with her family. We will see later her perspective on the effects this has had on her children's education.

As was made clear to me through the incomes reported by the respondents in this study and was well exemplified in the above excerpt from Marisa's interview, women's employment incomes alone are not sufficient to empower them economically (Antrobus, 2005; Kabeer,

2005b;Peake & Trotz, 1999) . The respondents, as other Guyanese women, must engage in elaborate coping systems which rely to varying degrees on non-monetary resources, reductions in the purchase of expensive food items, rationing, remittances, and savings schemes such as 'boxhand'⁵⁸. Moreover, not only do the respondents' income earning activities not empower them by lifting them out of financial poverty, labour markets and the organizations and institutions which support women's integration into them are themselves gendered which "creates, sustains and legitimizes underrepresentation or [the] unfairness" women experience within them (Whitworth, 1994, p. 390). This is because the labour market has been structured around the assumption that the normative worker is male (Whitworth, 1994), therefore legislation and organizational and employment systems have been tailored around men's physical and temporal capabilities and male culture. Women workers must therefore adapt if they choose to participate in waged labour, which is not always possible due to care work responsibilities. This delimits the employment opportunities available to women, and moreover in those cases where women adapt out of necessity, they are being further disempowered by an employment system that exploits (and expects) women's flexibility, rather than altering its structure to support women's *and* men's needs.

Furthermore, returning to the excerpt from Natasha's interview we can see that the burden of labour market participation does not challenge the respondents' gendered responsibility for the domestic sphere, thereby delimiting the transformatory potential of these activities to substantively empower women. In fact, all respondents asserted that they were responsible for everything pertaining to income, finances, and the running of the home, activities not only limited to those which would normally fall under the domain of women's gendered roles.

⁵⁸ Box-hand is as a combined lending/savings scheme in which a group of individuals contribute a pre-agreed sum of money on either a weekly or monthly basis into a communal pot. Each week, one person in the rotation receives the entire pot which provides that contributor with a large sum of money which they can use to make major purchases or pay off debts.

MB: And who would you say is the head of the household?

Natasha: Me

MB: You're the head of the household?

Natasha: Yeah

MB: Can you explain?

Natasha: First of all he [my husband] depends on me for everything.... Everything is ask your mother. Your mother have to do this and your mother have to do that. And he have to do the financing, but he doesn't look into it in detail.

MB: So you have to do the household finances and the business finances...

Natasha: Everything, I's do all the buyin' for the shop. I's do everything. For the children I do everything, I do everything.... And stretch the dollar.

Moreover, most of my respondents were also the household member primarily responsible for financially supporting themselves and their dependents. This would indicate that financial necessity has superseded any pressures to conform to appropriate gender roles prescribed through identification with the respondent's gendered and/or ethnic identity (see Chapter Three).

Furthermore, most of the respondents, with the exception of three, considered themselves the household head⁵⁹, particularly in the six cases where respondents were not living with their partners and had to depend on sources of income which they negotiated through varying methods of their own to support themselves⁶⁰. Even of the other six respondents who were living with their

⁵⁹ One respondent considered her mother, who owned the home in which she and her husband lived to be the household head, and the other respondent perceived herself and her sister to share the headship role. The third respondent to indicate that someone other than herself was the household head was Odessa, the respondent whose narrative follows surrounding the responsibilities she had to shoulder in the building of her house and in supporting herself and her husband in her household. Although surprising, her response can be explained by patriarchal ideology as she stated that her husband was the head of the household "because he is a man". None of the remaining respondents considered their partners to be the head of the household irrespective of whether or not they lived together.

⁶⁰ Grassroots women do not generally depend on income alone to help them survive. Each woman's situation is quite different. One might pay rent and have a higher income, another might be living in a home which is owned by extended family, or in an area of town which is occupied by squatters where no rental fees are paid. For those women living in shared housing, the utility bills are often split between the adult members of the household and others still might receive child support, or remittances from family

partners in marital or common-law relationship, four reported that they did not depend, or rely on their partner's income in any capacity. Conversely, in each of those four cases where the respondents did not depend on their live-in partner's income, the male partner relied on the care work rendered by the respondents, *in addition* to either their income, or physical resources that they could access through the respondent such as housing. One respondent stated:

Anneasa: We separated a few years ago and because of this problem [where my husband lost his job] he came back and I tried to help him. I'm still with him and still trying with him... but he is not working yet and I am still working trying to maintain everything.

MB: So you are the sole supporter of your household?

Anneasa: That is like three years now.

And another respondent noted:

Odessa: You see, my husband, he work but he money isn't big. And I work, and I's buildin' the home and it takes, you know you gotta find money fuh build' the home. These contractor that building these home, they just tekkin' a set of money out of you. And they stretchin' you up because they want more money out of you, but you got no choice because you want the home so you keep payin' them....

MB: Can you tell me a little bit about that if you don't mind? How much you make and how much your husband makes? And what kind of bills you pay?

Odessa: Well I got like phone bill, every three months I got the water bill, I's give it and it would last them, so like startin' of the year, January month I would give them like \$5000. And like my husband, when he works now, he's do he work fuh like \$23,000.

MB: Per month?

Odessa: He's do community work, he works in the community.

MB: Per month he makes \$23,000?

members who have either migrated or are working abroad. Those respondents whose incomes were very low, \$18,000 per month or less could not survive on this sum alone, and were those respondents most likely to have the most complex survival systems relying on multiple small and inconsistent sources of income and depending on precarious, or intergenerational housing situations. However, income alone is not a predictor of wellbeing or security, as a number of respondents who had steady jobs within the formal economy struggled to make ends meet because they did not have the additional resources some of the 'economically poorer' respondents did.

Odessa: Yeah, per month, \$23,000. He's gonna try fuh get a little guard work now. Right now he's be workin' in the night 'til next mornin'. Right so we's trying fuh get the house because I's got five more years. 55 you come off work ... My salary is 40 something thousand, and when they is done take out [taxes] I left back 45, 43, and I pay back credit union, I borrow a loan to 'ting the house, so I's pay back credit union, they's take out little money every month, and then I throw a box[hand] now, like a \$15,000, because I would throw the boxhand to gather a little money to buy up materials for the home, and then life insurance tek out they money for insurance, and then there are the union dues, and when everyone done take out, you really don't have much.

MB: And what about your husband, does he contribute to these expenses?

Odessa: Well like every month when [if] my husband give me money, I try to take the \$10,000 he give me and put up in the bank, and just tek little little fuh what we's need for everyday.

MB: So it sounds like you have control of the finances in your household?

Odessa: Yeah, because like my husband, he won't save money. He [thinks] like he big [rich], he want chickens every day, and I say boy, we can't do it like duh [that]. We buy chicken, you cut it up small you buy the greens, you cook a little today and save the rest for tomorrow. He would eat the whole thing and wouldn't care about tomorrow. And he don't understand the salary, because he say "but I's give you money, I give you so, and I give you so". And like I buy they things for the home, like the sugar and so, and it might look to he like it's nothing, but it's money spendin'! Sometimes he come and he say, "give me a \$100, I want a pack of cigarettes, or I want a chicken", and I say no, no, no. You can't do it like that... So like when he make he \$21,000 [after tax], he take eleven and he give me \$10,000. He gonna come back now and want -"umm, lend me a \$100. I gotta get this done, I gotta do this" you know, that kind of thing. And so I say, what did you do with your money? "My money, done, I had to pay this buddy, so, so, so so, so". And I say, this bad. And then there be cussin' up and busin' and, it's like a sting you know. And I don't need it. I want a peaceful and a quiet life. If you gonna give me the money and you bringin' up problems, it's best you keep it, I don't need it. I said whatever little I am working for, I could contain it for the house, and whatever little I could do for the house, I would save off. Because every single thing that I did, I show you. How much I work for, if I take money from credit-union, I show you. But if he go watch some football match somewhere, he gonna gamble the money he say he gonna use for buy materials for the house, and then when I call on he to buy the materials, there's no money. So I say, it's your money, you work for it, you's do with it what you want. I can't -because you know it look like I want you money but I don't want you money because I always show you what it is doin' and you still don't [trust me]. Like if I spend the money on the house and the expenses and I say the money done, he feel the money still there, and he say "I want this, I want duh" and I say I don't have any money, and he would believe I have more, and its problems and I don't need that. ... So you gotta learn to be independent on yourself.

While the increased fluidity of women's gendered roles as relating to labour market access would be characterized by some, including the developers of the MDG framework, to be a sign of empowerment, this inclusion exploits women's labour further. Although income earning may increase women's agency within the home, and expand their ability to spend money and make financial decisions, these remunerated activities also contribute to women's time burden and are simply keeping them afloat as opposed to raising them out of poverty. Furthermore, based on the excerpt above, these activities do not address the unequal distribution of resources and power within the household. Odessa, not unlike other respondents, also noted that in spite of being independent from her husband financially, she was still being subjected to abuse. This caused her to stop asking him for his share of the income to put towards the bills and the building of their house in hope of a "peaceful and quiet life".

The realm of appropriate activities and behaviour for women appears to have expanded into what has historically been men's domain, without according women equality of status or leisure time. Through cursory observation it may appear as though women are empowered because they run the household and are the primary decision makers, however, having the capacity to make decisions, control the household and earn an income does not translate to an improved quality of life or equality in the cases examined in my pool of respondents. As a result, the respondents' coping systems severely constrain their choices and hence the exercise of agency. Rather, the exacerbated time burden, achieved through a liberalising form of empowerment which requires the balancing of market related activities and care work, has produced a situation which Andaiye (2000) has observed as "getting women to work harder under the pretext that we're helping them to be liberated" (as cited in Scott, 2004, p. 210).

It could be argued that economic independence (from male partners) would increase women's capacity to resist inequality in the domestic sphere, however, a number of respondents

described scenarios in which they asserted their agency in order to gain control over difficult situations, yet not in such a manner as to fundamentally alter those relationships. For example, Odessa's decision to refrain from asking her husband for money in order to reduce conflict may have improved her condition in the domestic sphere in the short term, but this did not change her position in relation to her husband as (ideologically) she still perceived him to be the head of the household and had also not left the relationship in spite of the added hardship that it brings to her life. Similarly, Yvonne noted that she was not happy in her marriage of 38 years and hadn't been for most of it, even after having 15 children with her husband:

Am I happy in my marriage? No I am not happy in my marriage, but I have to keep my character though. And I have my children, and I feel more strong, because they is mostly grown up and I know how to be around them [for support]... My husband, he is just hangin' around in my mother's house. He don't do a 'ting, but I just do my 'ting and lef him be.

Yvonne's active decision to ignore her husband's presence while drawing on the company and support of her children to compensate for an unhappy marital relationship, again highlights a form of resistance which improves her emotional experience, but one that does not operate to challenge her husband's lack of contribution to the household, or to undermine the structures which influence her to remain in an oppressive and exploitative relationship. Furthermore, Anneasa's experience with separation and reconciliation following an altercation that she and her husband had, also leaves a number of oppressive structures such as racism, and gender relations which both perpetuate women's responsibility for care work, and legitimize domestic violence unchallenged, in spite of her laudable efforts to become financially independent from her husband and his family.

Anneasa :He told me he's going to give me a divorce I said, I surprise?! What did I did? I didn't do anything for deserve this. And I was crying for a long time on the phone, like for half hour, and then I put down the phone and I sit on the bed.and then I went to pick up my son from nursery. And then when I reach home I dial his office and I say I'm

ready whenever you ready to give me my divorce. I don't have a problem. And I said I would look after [our son] if he don't want to look after he. And he said he would leave whatever he had for [our son] with his mother. But when I go by his mom he never leave anything for my son. So I never ask him for anything.

...

While we were separated, my husband would see me and my son in the road and he would pass us straight, and I didn't mind because you know what I say -my father teach me this- if you have breath, you don't depend on a man for anything. Even if my husband walk through that door, I am not going to go to the court and ask he for nothing. [My son] is my child, I have responsibility. Whatever he have done, I thank God and whatever... if I have to work two job or whatever, I will want to be there for my son and myself and have respect for myself because when [my son] grow, I want him to have respect for his wife, and I want him to have responsibility and when he grow, he could stand on his own two feet. You don't have to depend on your mother or father, or uncle or auntie or nobody.... So well I say I needed to pick myself up back and start back up with school because I left all my job because he [my husband] used to maintain me. Then I had some money in my bank \$200,000 in my bank, so I use it to pay for my computer course. And like 6 months later I was sitting in my exam for my computer course. My phone was vibrating, vibrating, and it was [my husband]. And he said I need to see you. So I told he I would finish my exam in like 30 minutes. So I went to see him and he told me he lost his job, and his father was sick and that he needed me. And so I [moved into his parents' home and] care for his father, and I don't speak with nobody because he sisters' don't like me because I look black. I am mix and they Indian, and they say [my son] is not [my husband's] child even though when you look at my son he is everything his father. So I move back in with he, with his family, and I don't take nothing, I don't use nothing, and I just help care for his father because his sisters' do nothing for he father, and I don't want any problem. But still, sometimes he 'buse me.. and so when his father died, I move back in with my mother.

...

But he still isn't workin' and he come back to me [at my mother's]. And he accuse me of all kinds of things. But because I know how to manage myself and from then to now, I never 'buse up my body, or be with no men [not like] my husband. He used to cheat on me, and I say man, your life and my life are so different. What you did, it's not like I am going to condemn you but I'm not doing what you did. I am not cheating on you. I am working so hard. And sometimes when I come home here, it's like responsibilities still and I am trying to make it work, and he would just like laugh it off like it is nothing.

Rather than liberating her, Anneasa's ability to remain economically independent from her husband and his family appears to have made her even more indispensable to her husband, who was able to rely on her for to care for his father illness, as well as for economic support while he was unemployed, which in turn perpetuated the cycle of violence for Anneasa. Moreover, in spite

of her ability to take full financial responsibility for herself and her son, she was not able to avoid prejudice on account of her racialized and gendered identity as a woman of mixed race, being accused of infidelity by her sisters in-law and her husband who were of Indian descent, although he was the said perpetrator of infidelity. This suggests that what at first may look like economic empowerment, does not operate to counter inequalities based on attitudes arising from patriarchal ideology.

Furthermore, Anneasa's choice to refrain from asking for child-support by ensuring through any means necessary that she could support herself and her son in order to maintain her pride and dignity, she is inadvertently releasing her husband from his consanguineal and legal responsibility to provide for their mutual child. This simultaneously reinforces a culture in which men, even under the auspices of wedlock, are not expected to be accountable for their actions, which erodes respect and effectiveness of the law—a point which also relates to Anneasa and Odessa's stated tolerance of domestic violence.

Therefore, unlike many of their Southern counterparts, the urban Guyanese women interviewed appear to be able to assert a significant amount of agency in their lives, which allows them to make choices, which on a personal level, will reduce their experiences with hunger, violence or domestic conflict, and will certainly operate to improve their condition and perhaps their self worth. However, social and economic processes and patriarchal ideology mediate the range of those choices, and the resources women can draw on. This delimits their ability to live lives that do not rely on the elasticity of their time, patience, and labour, perpetuating a cycle of disempowerment. Although a number of the women interviewed who were recruited through Red Thread had on occasion participated in public protests staged by the organization in relation to various issues such as domestic violence legislation, the Value Added Tax (VAT), and their living-income campaign (see Chapter 4), these activities impose further women's time even

though they provide an avenue for personal and social empowerment. Therefore, in spite of a close relationship with the organization, regular participation in Red Thread's advocacy work is not a cornerstone of their daily, weekly or even monthly lives⁶¹, which might contribute towards establishing a critical mass for social transformation. As a result, as much as this remains the case for the other respondents not linked to Red Thread, these women continue to live in a disempowering environment characterized by continued sexism and in some cases racism, which prioritizes economic growth over social policy, thereby depending on women's unpaid labour. However the respondents time, physical endurance and mental tolerance levels are *not* infinitely elastic, and there are significant personal and social costs associated with the pressures that are placed upon all women from similar contexts to perform all of what they do, issues which will be discussed in the following section. Therefore, in spite of economic independence from male partners (as distinct from *de facto* economic independence), significant control over household resources and decisions, and in a few cases community involvement around women's issues, one would be hard-pressed to argue that the respondents experience gender equality or 'liberating' empowerment.

The Disconnect Between MDG3 and Women's Lived Experiences

The previous section highlighted some of the problems with taking women's integration into waged labour at face value. Upon deeper analysis it is clear that for these respondents, time spent in income earning is a matter of economic necessity, and does not appear to produce liberating empowerment in relation to their financial or social position. Rather, shouldering the burden of both domestic and labour market activities appears to chain women to an unforgiving cycle of essential labour which delimits their ability to use their time for leisure, self

⁶¹ With the exception for one respondent who works for a stipend cooking and doing general administration for the organization.

improvement, or activities which would help them substantively empower themselves or their children in any regular fashion. However, as previously mentioned, a few women did expand the limits of their already heavy burdened time to participate in community-based activities. For instance, the few (three) women relatively closely linked to the operations of Red Thread, and three women who were participating in courses at a masjid. Furthermore the three women who visited the masjid for after work courses, also did not appear to be familiar with the MDGs, although the masjid did have some form of international links (the exact nature of which I am not familiar with) seeking to improve conditions for the poor. I became aware of this by being offered one of hundreds of pairs of Toms shoes provided through the company's 'One for One' program⁶². Moreover, none of the other respondents not affiliated with either organization expressed any knowledge of the MDGs either.

Returning to Chapter Two, which described the impetus behind the MDGs, the UN positioned the Goals as a framework that seeks to link stakeholders with processes of development, and to create a platform from which "ordinary citizens" could advocate for their human rights (United Nations, 2003, p. iv). Gender equality is intimately linked to human rights, but the engagement of my respondents around the MDGs including MDG3 was unsurprisingly not evident, given that the framework has little institutional relevance, even within the organizations in Guyana which are mandated to help facilitate their achievement (see Chapter 5).

However, even in terms of the unitary target of MDG3, eliminating gender disparity at all levels of education by the year 2015, as well as its indicators which include increasing the proportion of women and girls in primary education, formal employment in the non-agricultural

⁶² Tom's shoes is a for profit company that runs a non-profit subsidiary and comprises an example of cultural capitalism, whereby the consumer buys her or his redemption of being a consumerist. By buying a pair of shoes from Tom's, Tom's donates a pair of shoes to children in developing country contexts. See: <http://www.toms.ca/evolving-our-giving/> (To be clear, the pair of shoes I received were a black pair of rubber-soled, stretch-on slippers, nothing resembling their patterned, glorified and over-priced canvas shoes designed for individuals with much higher purchasing power).

sector, and increasing women's political representation (see Appendix A, Table A1), MDG3 appears to have little relevance for the respondents in the study. In the first section of this chapter I addressed some of the underlying issues which prevented the women interviewed from experiencing a liberating form of empowerment in spite of the high level of agency they are able to assert in their lives. In the remainder of this chapter I address these issues specifically in relation to each of the indicators of MDG3.

Political Representation

The only question on my interview guide that could act to uncover the relevance of women's 31.3% parliamentary representation in Guyana, asked, "how do you feel the government can help you? Do you think enough is being done?". The overwhelming answer to the second question was *no*, irrespective of the respondent's race. This suggests that while on the one hand there is a common perception in Guyana that the PPP rules in favour of its Indo-Guyanese constituents (as the preceding party the PNC did with the Afro-Guyanese), on the other hand is the perception that the policies of the PPP are geared toward middle-class and affluent constituents. There was a sense that the concerns of the urban, low-income, female respondents and other women in their communities were being bypassed regardless of racial identity.

Some of the responses to this question included:

Mary: I don't say the government [should be doing more] because to me the government don't care a damn if you live or die. We need to support each other in the community and help each other.

And...

Bibi: I wish the government could change more. To make life better. Especially for women and single parents. Like for now the government just give a voucher. Every child from the school is get a voucher. The voucher costs \$1500. That is all they doing. That is all they doing. But they need more. Cuz the government is got a lot of money and, 1500 dollars, [you] go out and get a pants and a shirt, you still have to buy boots, you still have to buy a bag, books. I'm not saying its bad, but mostly they should be helping the single parents.

And...

Hillary: They got a lot of issues, because there are a lot of single parents out there and a lot of girls that are pregnant. These young girls don't have what to eat so that's why they's end up with these men, a lot of taking advantage. And then they end up with a set of children and go looking for another man for bread. [The government] they've got to support and educate these girls. If you're not ready to have children, don't go and have sex. Or use protection. Yeah, because, as a single parent, you need social assistance. I used to live in French Guyana and the government over there, it take care of those kids. I don't know man, there's a lot of things, a lot of things the government should do.

....

And you know, those same persons, the President, the Prime Minister and those Ministers should should come down and spend a day in these neighbourhoods and see how children are struggling because they mothers can't feed them, and dem poor children have days where they go the whole day and they don't get nothing to eat.

And...

Natasha: I dunno they need to create jobs, they need to create jobs for women who are not educated. They got this program called Wand or something [Women of Worth]. Yeah. But they got so much scrutinizing to go through. Before you get this --and the money starts as low as \$150,000- because you know, then you can't earn! The second you decide to do hairdressing- You can't have 200 hair dresser! You know, you can't have 500 people mindin' chicken, you need to do some other thing.... So that is it [real jobs]. Everybody need to be doing something, especially women, because every day dem man killing them out. Everyday! Men have the right to leave whenever they choose to. Women don't have the right. Why!? If the man wan left you, he gone. He ain't got the time. And the court system is bad. Because if, especially if a family got money, he go through in the morning and he come out on the road. I mean it happens all over, but still, [the government must] try to make things in place. Because the government spending so much. 100million here, 50million here, 200million here and you still don't see where all these millions are going.

These responses indicate that in spite of the high proportion of women in parliament, women in these positions have not been able to address the types of issues which grassroots women face, nor have they been successful in ensuring that the benefits of government spending reach poor women. 31.3% representation by women in Guyana's National Assembly is certainly praiseworthy, however this achievement must be understood within its appropriate context. In Guyana's polarized political climate, parliamentarians are elected into office by degree of ideological alignment with the party, and given that so many women are currently visible in the

National Assembly, it is likely that, at least outwardly, their alignment with the principles of their respective parties is strong. And as we have seen with the replacement of the NDS with the PRSP by the ruling party, the PPP, these principles do not prioritize *de facto* gender equality, or social harmony. Therefore, women's high rate of inclusion in Guyana's Parliament does not mean that the government necessarily takes women's issues seriously, nor does it mean that the female parliamentarians themselves espouse feminist values or can identify with grassroots women and their needs⁶³.

Moreover, because women still represent a minority in the National Assembly in comparison to their male counterparts, and would thus hold a more tenuous position within the ranks of the party, it is unlikely that they would be outspoken critics of the patriarchal culture that exists in the upper echelons of power. Numerous studies have examined this issue and found that either a 'critical mass' (see: Kanter 1977a/b; Childs, S., & Krook), or strong 'gender ideology' shared by smaller groups of women (see: Dhalerup, 1988; Paxton & Kunovich) is necessary to incite change within political and corporate organizations. Given that middle class women in Guyana who enter the ranks of parliament are secured with well paying jobs doing limited work, it is unlikely that they would risk this position to address issues facing grassroots women, who are thence far removed for their own realities. In other words the political consciousness or strong 'gender ideology' necessary to effect change in Guyana is unlikely to be espoused by female

⁶³ The legislation which has been praised for achieving nearly a third parliamentary representation by women in Guyana's National Assembly, does not actually stipulate that one third of parliamentarians must be women. Rather, the law states that the two lists from which parliamentarians are elected, the Geographical Constituency list, and the Party National Top-up list, must be women. The leadership of the party selects who will be first to take a seat. Thus, for all intents and purposes, the 33.33% of women on the lists may not be selected, and none of them would ever be elected to the National Assembly. Therefore, in Guyana's Mixed-Member Proportional electoral system, if X party wins a seat in one of Guyana's ten administrative regions, the representative most favourable to the leadership of that party will take that seat irrespective of whether it is a man or a women. The same is true for seats earned through the 'largest remainder' formula from the National Top-up list. This issue reinforces the need for female parliamentarians to strongly align with the ideology of the party and their male counterparts.

parliamentarians, meaning that resistance to *de facto* gender equality at these levels continues to trickle down into government legislation and policy which affects grassroots women. Returning to the organizational interviews, the respondent from the CARICOM Secretariat elucidated this point well:

R:Very often that is what creates quite a heated debate at the professional level, because they see a lot of women in a lot of middle and even in upper managerial positions [in the Caribbean], maybe even more than men, but when you get to the really top decision making decisions, they are still male dominated, and I think that happens in our parliaments as well. Woman in politics, it's still relatively few.

...

I think it comes back to the whole issue of culture, because if the men don't feel that there is an issue, or the issue isn't as obvious as it was 10-15 years ago, then you have a little more difficulty getting change. And I have seen it in those meetings, like the gender impact assessment with the 12 countries in the CSME, whenever we have had that meeting, and most of those people in those meetings are senior government civil servants and people from the university and so on, we've heard some really amazing things being expressed by the males in those meetings. The permanent secretary- it's like he really doesn't think there's any gender problem in his ministry, and we're like. What!?? So when you realize these are the decision makers, and they are the ones to implement these empowerment things, and even the fact that we've had so much difficulty convincing - getting the gender post filled in the secretariat- [that] speaks again to that fact.

Therefore, taking women's parliamentary representation at face value as a sign of empowerment is flawed, as it is not automatic that by virtue of being women, female parliamentarians will seek, or have the capacity, to effect change for those women with the least power. As the grassroots respondents noted, the issues that affect them most deeply are poverty, lack of jobs, lack of social assistance and support for raising children on meagre incomes, access and information to family planning, and domestic violence. Because these issues are feminist concerns, which are not priorities for the male dominated National Assembly, female parliamentarians are thereby unlikely to make strong recommendations about, or see these issues through to implementation. As a result the MDG indicator seeking to increase women's representation at the parliamentary

level is thus far irrelevant to grassroots women, until institutional sexism and race based politics are brought to an end, and the concerns of the poor and marginalized are addressed.

Representation in Non-Agricultural Employment

Returning to one of the major themes emanating from the discussions I had with the respondents about grassroots women's demands of the government, the issue of job creation occupied many of the responses, and also came up frequently elsewhere. While it is obvious that women's engagement in waged labour creates a double burden of domestic and income earning activities, which weigh heavily on their health and time, the economic necessity of being gainfully employed cannot be disregarded.

Although achievement on the indicators of MDG3 are reported as having produced "strides in gender equality" (Guyana making strides, 2013, ¶1), again, through a closer analysis of the context which underpins the indicators, this does not appear to be the case. The 2011 Guyana MDG Report indicates that women had 33% of the share of waged employment in the non-agricultural sector (UNDP, 2011), however, the interpretation and acceptance of the statistics as valid and representative of experience must be taken with caution. This is because the 2011 MDG report indicated that:

The share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector has increased from 29 percent in 1991 to 33 percent in 2006. This positive trend suggests that labour markets are becoming more open to women in industry and service sectors, and that more women are in a position to secure for themselves better income, economic security and well-being (UNDP, 2011, p.28).

The 2011 Guyana MDG report, cited that these data were drawn on the 1990 and 2002 Censuses as well as the 2006 Household Budget Survey. However upon examining the 2007 Guyana MDG report, which derived its data from the 1995/1996 and 2002/2003 Education Digest of Guyana, in addition to the 2002 Census, the numbers appear to differ between the two documents. The 2007 MDG report indicated that 38% of women of working age were employed in the non-agricultural

sector in 1992, while the rate dropped to 35% in 2002 (Government of Guyana, 2007). Out of all of the surveys that these reports cited, the only one currently accessible to the public is the 2002 Census, which again reported different statistics. The 2002 Census indicated that 31%¹⁴ of women of working age were engaged in non-agricultural employment in 2002, however the same data for 1992 was not provided (see Table 5). These varied data sets make it difficult to accurately assess women's employment trends in the non-agricultural sector over the last several years.

Table 5: Reported Percentage of Women Engaged in Formal Employment (Total), and Non-Agricultural Employment per the 2002 Census, 2007 Guyana MDG Report and 2011 MDG Report⁶⁴

Report/ Year	1991	1992	2002	2006
2002 Census: %Women in Formal Sector	-	40%	34%	-
2002 Census: %Women employed in Non-Agricultural Sector	-	-	31% ⁶⁵	-
2007 MDG Report: %Women in Non-Agricultural Employment	-	38%	35%	-
2011 MDG Report: Women in Non-Agricultural employment	29%	-	-	33%

Source: 2002 Guyana Census, 2007 Guyana MDG Report, 2011 Guyana MDG Report

For the purposes of this thesis, the 2002 Census will be taken as the most accurate source. Although the census did not provide data for any period other than 2002 in relation to women's participation in non-agricultural employment, it did indicate that in 1992 40% of women were formally employed (in *both* non-agricultural employment and formally reported agricultural employment) as opposed to 34% in 2002 (Bureau of Statistics, 1997, p. 96). This data alone is

⁶⁴ Adapted from Bureau of Statistics, 2007; Government of Guyana, 2007, UNDP, 2011.

⁶⁵ This figure was calculated by taking the 2002 percentage of formally employed females (34%) (Bureau of Statistics, 2007, p. 96) and multiplying it by the total percentage of employed females in non-agricultural employment (92.2%) (Bureau of Statistics, 2007, p. 107). Unfortunately the same values were not available for 1992 for the purposes of comparison.

suggestive of a downward trend in formal employment for women irrespective of what sector of the formal economy they were engaged. Moreover, assuming that the data presented in the Guyana MDG Reports are accurate (perhaps the discrepancies result out of data that was later adjusted within the surveys themselves), the same downward trend is identified. To make this point clear, if the data presented in the 2007 MDG report was juxtaposed against the data from the 2011 MDG Report on the variable of women's representation in non-agricultural employment, the data would read: 1992, 38%; 2002, 35% and 2006, 33%.

Therefore, rather than signaling an increase in women's representation in non-agricultural employment which according to the rhetoric of the MDGs would find more women to be in "a position to secure for themselves better income, economic security and well-being" (UNDP, 2011, p.28) on account of progress on this indicator, it appears that the opposite is true and more women are entering the informal economy to compensate for the loss of jobs, unforgiving working hours and conditions, and poorly remunerated labour in the formal sector. It thus cannot be argued, even purely in relation to progress on the employment indicator, that women's empowerment is increasing in Guyana, as the trend appears to be going in the other direction. Secondly when one examines the quality of work women are engaged in and the outcomes that work in the non-agricultural sector of the formal economy produces for women's lives, it too does not appear to signal empowerment. One of my respondents, Odessa for example, described the hazardous working conditions at the hospital where she had been working for over 20 years, but could not leave because within 5 years time she would be collecting her pension:

Anywhere you work you got to take orders, it's discipline that would carry you through the work. So like when you done cleaning on one floor, you wash up all the bed pans, wash all the dirty clothes, and you wipe down. You go up to the next floor, you gotta do it all over. You go to the back, and there's more bed pan again and sometimes they pack up there for days, and when you go, you gotta do it because it's your job. And then you find the linen wrap up with all things, dirty needles, all these things, nobody care about you because it seem to me like they don't count you as a staff. I don't know if it because you not in the position they are [doctor's and nurses] but this is the kind of things that you face. You

know, and nuff time I work and the bloody water spray in me eyes, in me face. My husband, he buy me goggles, and I just rest it down and somebody gone with it. You know, and today when I be workin' I say, Lord, you know all these years here, all the service and I'm big now, because if I was more young I would leave the work. Believe me I would leave the work. You know why? It is too pressurin'. You know, you see all these fingers, these fingers they get cramp. All them joints painin' but who you gonna cry to, you gotta do it because it's your daily bread and it's your job.

Keisha on the other hand left her job as an electrical technician in order earn a better living doing her snackette business in a semi-permanent stall on the road:

MB: So what do you think about the quality of your schooling?

Keisha: What I recognize in Guyana, you go through all of these schoolin' and they don't have jobs. To provide you. Don't care how much certificates you got, you gotta end up doing something on your own to make it. Yeah, you might get the job, and you get the salary, but the salary can't pay the bills. So that's why you branch off and do other things. This [vending] wasn't my source. My source was electrical installation whereby I do calculations and science and things like that. And I was to go back and teach, for like two years [at Guyana Technical Institute], but because of the salary, I just decide not to do that. But whenever you done [the program], you still owe them two years service. And I don't do it down to now. And they don't care how long you livin', you gotta still give back dem 2 years service.

MB: So at some point you'll have to do it.

Keisha: Yeah, at some point I'll have to stop off doing my kind of business and go back to doing that.

MB: Ahhh, because the schooling was paid for and they require you pay it back through service.

Keisha: Yeah

MB: And how much would you earn doing your trade?

Keisha: Like a normal salary, like \$24,000 a month, tax out.

MB: And your new business, do you mind me asking how much you are able to carry home at the end of the month?

Keisha: Yeah, but these kind of business, right, we normally cannot give you a figure. You gotta remember it be fluctuatin'. Like you can't normally give you like a full figure but it is be like more than your normal salary and everything, but I can't give you a full figure because it be fluctuating. Some days better, some days worse, some days between. You know.

MB: But better than a normal salary?

Keisha: A lot better.

Anneasa decided to leave her job as a preschool teacher despite having completed part of a university degree because the hours were more flexible doing housekeeping for a small business owned by a Canadian. Her change in occupation was necessary in order to spend quality time with her son and to tutor him:

Anneasa: When he was in Grade 3 and I was working and I didn't have so much time, he was dropping a lot back. ...

MB: So you feel that him lagging behind was not because the schooling was not good, but because he didn't get the attention from you?

Anneasa: Yes, and you know when I leave my job and then he do the trial test at Christmas he picked up back, and then the other year when he went to the next class he was doing well. And still up to now he is doing well!

MB: That's great to hear. It sounds like you are very dedicated to his education and so you ended up leaving a job where it sounds like you had to work a lot of hours. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

Anneasa: When I start, right.... she tell me [the manager], that I'm only going to teach at nursery, but she didn't tell me that every week we gonna change the (rates?). So what happened, the first week I was teaching the nursery. The second week, the same thing. But the third week she put me on the babies, the daycare, but I didn't mind, I would keep doing it. But then she told me that I was gonna come off at 5, which I didn't come off 'til to 6. So when I reach home it is 'til to 7 or 7:30, and [my son] comes home from school, he tired, he eat whatever, or sometimes he don't even eat because he's lookin' out for me. So then she said she gonna put me back into the nursery for a week, and like we normally come of like til to 4:30 from the nursery and one day she ask me, she say "we don't have an extra teacher", if I could stay back to help. I said yes, but my timing is not- she said well, she gonna flex it. So I say ok, two weeks, three weeks, she not flexing with me, So the day I went to her, and I say I'm sorry, I'm not having enough time for my son, you need to release me a little earlier. And she say that she can't allow me to go home the time I want, so I said well, I don't think I'll be working back here, but thanks for everything.

...

Anneasa: I had my diploma, and courses in my degree [in Childcare Management from UG], and I used to taught the little ones in preschool and daycare and I tried to manage myself with that, but [as I said] the time limits weren't comfortable to my son, so what I

had to do, my friend had a job, and so I said what kind of job, and she say “it’s just a housekeeping” and I said, is it hard, and she said “no”. So I went the first day and I had to clean the office and so forth, so I went home and I said, I’m gonna take this job, because it’s not like something I should be shame of or whatever, it’s prefer to my son education. I need to have some time for him. So I took the job because it would be flexible hours.

MB: So how was the pay at this job?

Anneasa: Well it is hard to say because normally they pay by the month, but I get pay by the week. If I add up my salary now its far different from what I used to get. Like right now I get \$12,000 a week and before it was like \$40,000 a month.

MB: So if you could get the hours you wanted at the nursery, would you go back to that job because that was what you were trained in?

Anneasa: Yes, I would have go back. It’s a job I like.

The issues brought up by Oddessa, Keisha and Anneasa point to the challenges inherent in being employed in the non-agricultural sector of the formal economy, none of which signal any indication of empowerment or gender equality. Rather, their experiences highlight long, poorly remunerated work hours in which women are separated from their children for most of day and cannot account for their whereabouts, activities, or safety –issues which are of noted concern within women’s organizations in Guyana, international organizations (ILO, 2008), and by feminist scholars (Kabeer, 2012) given their potential to perpetuate poverty since mothers cannot be sufficiently engaged in their children’s discipline and development as highlighted through the excerpt from Anneassa, and will be further explored in the following section.

Moreover, if experiences with the work itself are even remotely as difficult and thankless for other formally employed poor women as they were for Oddessa due to a lack of regulation and respect for low-level employees, it can hardly be said that inclusion in the non-agricultural sector of the formal economy is empowering, and it is unsurprising that women would choose informal income earning activities over the many additional drawbacks of formal employment. Kabeer (2012) reinforces this point by indicating that class also mediates the experiences of formally employed women (p. 18). Women who are better off and have higher educations tend to

occupy jobs such as Anneassa and Keisha where working conditions are not as appalling as they were for Anneassa, yet they are still unsatisfactory in meeting their income needs and necessity to expand the freedom of their time, which has the effect of pushing even slightly more educated and skilled women such as Keisha and Anneassa into the informal economy (Kabeer, 2012, p. 19). Anneassa and Keisha's preference would have been to stay in the positions in which they were trained and skilled if the rates of remuneration, and the flexibility offered by the informal sector were equal. As we can see from Oddessa's experience as a hospital janitor, her job has provided her with a maximum income of GYD\$45,000 per month after over 20 years of service, while Anneassa was making \$48,000 as a casually employed housekeeper, and was able to benefit from more flexible working hours. Keisha who was previously employed in the private sector said her net income was as low as \$24,000 and that as a successful hawker, she was making significantly more.

The trend toward informalization is not limited to Guyana however, but has been documented in numerous country contexts (see: Heintz & Pollin, 2003; Ghosh, 2009; Chatterjee, 2012), and appears to be underpinned by neoliberal economic policies, which have resulted in deregulation and increasing flexibilization of work due to the search for lower production costs. This has resulted in a much less stable global workforce due to the more precarious employment needs of the private sector, and the concomitant reduction in incomes in the formal economy, which have pushed workers to seek out other forms of employment (Beneria, 2001). In fact, most of the grassroots respondents in the study were employed in the informal sector, not out of choice, but because no other economic opportunities were available to them. Respondents such as Bibi and Priya referred to livelihoods in which they are constantly patching together various resources and sources of income due to many structural constraints imposed on their lives including marital relationships, and their low level of education which has mediated their employment

opportunities, even in sectors for which a high level of education is not needed. This point was reinforced by Natasha:

So I tell you a story. They got some girls living behind me so, and I helped do an application for one of them. She was looking for a job, but, she drop out of school. She only went to primary school, and she didn't get through with the application because they want people with experience and with high school education. You don't need that. You going to a biscuit factory, you packin'! And you staplin' the boxes! You know common sense would carry you through.

Therefore for some women whose incomes are so precarious that the stability of formal employment would be beneficial, the opportunity is simply not available.

Representation in Education

This points to the importance of employment-gearred education, and job opportunities that are flexible to the demands women face daily. As mentioned in Chapters One and Two, the most recent Guyana MDG report indicates that girls and women have been equally represented at primary and secondary educational levels since the mid 1990s, and as of 2011 began to outnumber males at the secondary and tertiary level (UNDP, 2011, pp. 25-26). Equality of enrolment rates in primary, secondary and tertiary education, as monitored through the MDG framework, may look to be a fantastic achievement, but this achievement alone does not address the difficulties women face finding and retaining gainful employment after they leave school, and furthermore do not address the high levels of drop-out and low qualification levels by which the Guyanese labour force is characterized. As mentioned in the previous chapter, the most recent census from 2002 showed that 65.3% of males and 60.2% of females over the age of 15 in Region 4 had no educational qualification beyond the elementary level (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 87). Among the respondents, only four had a high school qualification or higher.

Attending school is mandatory until the age of 16, however writing the Caribbean Examination Council (CXC) Exams does not usually take place until 5th form (grade 11). Upon

passing the exam in at least 5 subjects, students are considered to have a high school qualification. However, by the 5th form many girls and boys have already reached the age of 16 and do not return to school because they have already surpassed the mandatory school age, are not seeking a tertiary education thereby leaving school before the exam, or leave because they have been unsuccessful in passing the subjects they need and cannot invest more time or money to try again. Moreover, many girls leave due to pregnancy (Bureau of Statistics Guyana, 2007, p. 86). As a result, there is a very high proportion of the population without a high school qualification.

Natasha notes that women have “so much things ahead of [their] life, so [we] have to drop certain things to achieve other things” meaning that there are numerous sacrifices women have to make in their educational and career paths in order to balance their own interests, the interests of their families and economic necessity. If girls become pregnant while in school, there are few institutional mechanisms in place to support them to continue after they give birth, therefore leaving school may be both a practical and economic necessity. Furthermore, many women leave school early because there is a sense that their employment opportunities will be meagre with or without a qualification, and the demands of care work in extended families pull them away from their education. However, some sacrifices, such as the one which Marisa has to make in relation to being employed full time appears to have negative effects on her own children’s education, a situation which she herself experienced growing up, thereby perpetuating a cycle of precariousness and time poverty:

MB: Was your schooling good? Were you able to use what you learned in school and apply it to your life?

Marisa: Umm actually my mother was a single parent and she had a lot of us, I mean she couldn’t- I was like, I couldn’t deal with the situation, I couldn’t study in school because I had a lot of things to do and I had to come and help my mother work and everything like that, so that is why I didn’t go far in school [third Form or 9th grade]. She couldn’t afford it. She try, but ummm- she couldn’t afford.

MB: Do you feel that your schooling, what you did have, helped you get a job or apply it to your job?

Marisa: Well actually, it didn't really help me get a job, because remember I didn't finish out school and get any certificate or anything, but the only thing that I did get a certificate in after I go to school was in sewing classes.

...

MB: What about your children, do they go to school?

Marisa: All of them.

MB: And what about the quality of their education, what do you think about that?

Marisa: Umm its really poor because umm, well nine children is not easy for maintain, and maintain the home and everything because I ain't gettin' no help from nobody. I workin', they father workin', they father workin' in the interior and he's be away from us for 43 days. And when he comes home he spends 14 days. That's how they do the job. And ummm -actually the standard of living in Guyana is not up to standard. Everything expensive, and everything fuh send these children to school is very expensive, and remember when they gone to school they come home to themselves. And I be home like, when I's leave like 7 or 8 in the mornin' I's go home back 8 or 9 o'clock and they are already in their bed. So I don't get fuh you know [spend quality time with them]. I don't really get fuh do that, so I's just try fuh get something in they belly and somewhere to sleep. Yeah, comfortable bed and food in they belly. You know they schooling is poor. My fourth daughter, the fourth child, she did the Common Entrance Exam and she didn't do well. But I's – you know [sucks teeth], it's really frustrating because I cannot make no time. It's less time you get with them. Maybe in the morning, and hour, hour and a half with them, and in the nights when you get home they be down sleeping.

MB: So do you think that the quality of their schooling isn't that good because of the quality of their schooling or because you don't get to spend time with them?

Marisa: Yeah, because I don't get time fuh spend with them. Because remember the schoolin' is fine but you gotta spend some time with them, help them to do their homework so they could you know, concentrate on what they gotta do. To me, it's be like stressed out because I'm not there when they go home so they don't get to focus on their school.

This excerpt points to the fact that domestic obligations and restricted finances are yet other factors often holding women back from finishing school or pursuing a post-secondary education. Moreover, while there appear to be opportunities in male dominated sectors of the economy such as in the trades and engineering, the jobs are not flexible to women's care work responsibilities,

and women who do penetrate the field are often subjected to provocation and sexual harassment. As a result, Marisa's son has a likely career path paved for him in spite of his poor school performance, while her daughter's future is more uncertain. Already she is being groomed for domesticity and motherhood:

MB: Right, so your son, he's 16, so he's still in high school? What grade is he in?

Marisa: Yes, he's supposed to be, he's supposed to write the CXC, but he drop back. So I give he up to next year and if ain't make it into it I thinking that he do ummm – He doing electrical installation [at school], so I [think I will] send he fuh get a GTI [Guyana Technological Institute] certificate. You know in the school they teach them that, they have electrical installation, carpentry, so he choose electrical installation and he doing duh, and this he doin' best in, but he school work is very poor. My husband was tellin' me he would be so perfect in that, so he could do that.

MB: So I was going to ask about your children helping around the house and your son helping here at the market. I see he has a different career path paved out for him, what about your daughter's?

Marisa: Yes, because my daughter do the washin' and the cleanin' and she make the breakfast and she make the lunch, she make dinner. Some days when I wake up early in the morning I would do all dem 'tings, but usually I's so tired it's usually just fuh put it deh, put it deh, put it deh, put it deh, you put on, and you put on, and I just run out. We'll see what could come later.

Another respondent lamented her own lost opportunity for education and placed a high value upon it, she did everything in her power to ensure her own children would have the opportunities which she did not have on account of her care work responsibilities:

MB: So what did you think about the quality of your education?

Natasha: If I had more chance to do more things, I could have go further. But I didn't have the opportunity.

Me: What was preventing you?

Natasha: Money. Because I lived with my grandmother, and I had to care for her.

...

MB: And what do you think about the quality of [your children's] education? What would you say about that?

Natasha: It's good

MB: Did they do well on their tests and get into good schools?

Natasha: Yes

MB: So your children are very bright obviously.

Natasha: Yeah. That's why I am working very hard for them to get it.

MB: You're working hard so you can pay for their education?

Natasha: Yes... My daughter wants to go for Amerindian studies at UG (University of Guyana).

The reliance on women's unpaid care work which operates to delimit women's opportunities is a theme which wove through many of the interviews and was present in many of the excerpts included in this chapter. Therefore, publicizing the achievement of gender parity in education in Guyana is yet another statistic that cannot be taken at face value as an indicator of empowerment. As we have seen here, parity in enrolment rates speaks little to the opportunities education creates for girls and women. Without addressing attitudes which see women's place as primarily home makers and care takers, and without addressing the structural constraints which prevent women's fair integration into waged employment, gender parity in education cannot mean anything more than a simple ratio which has no significant positive impact on women's lives. Unfortunately, women's equal or higher representation at all educational levels does not translate into: a) qualifications; and b) better access to jobs, gainful employment, or a living wage. As a result, unlike the other two indicators of MDG3, it would appear that the education based indicator and target of the Goal has little relevance in the lives of the grassroots women respondents.

Conclusion

Liberating empowerment begins with a form of personal awakening in which women begin to see themselves differently, which changes the way others begin to see them (Kabeer, 2005b). While all of the respondents had significant pride and respect for themselves and all of the hard work they were able to accomplish in the face of numerous obstacles, their actions and activities continue to be constrained by a disempowering environment characterized by patriarchal attitudes, racism and radical market policies. Economic necessity has forced women to continue to operate within the existing economic, political and social power structures, which has prevented the reaching of a threshold for major change in their own lives, and society at large. The seeds of empowerment have sprouted for a number of respondents, who are engaged in activism and community work, but this too draws on the already overstretched time burden which women carry in their daily lives. As a result, irrespective of what the indicators of MDG3 may suggest, the urban Guyanese women who comprised my respondent pool cannot be characterized as empowered or sharing the experience of gender equality. Furthermore, as was discussed, in the second part of the chapter, none of the indicators of MDG3 appear to have significant relevance in their lives. As a result, it would appear that the MDG framework, particularly in relation to MDG3, is insufficient for addressing the challenges and constraints which continue to place a heavy burden on urban Guyanese women's lives.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

The MDGs were positioned as a novel development framework seeking to address multidimensional forms of poverty by paying increased attention to Human Development and human rights throughout the eight Goals. The MDGs were expected to be a rallying point for grassroots citizens to hold their governments and the international community accountable for ensuring that attention is being paid to the issues that underpin them. However, numerous scholars have argued that even in their homogenized form, the Human Development and human rights aspects of poverty that were supposed to be addressed throughout the MDGs have been marginalized through an overemphasis on economic growth. The implementation of neoliberal economic policies as the best method for the achievement of the Goals has been said to have occurred at the expense of direct attention to the Goals themselves, particularly in relation to the MDGs dealing with concepts most difficult to measure such as the goal seeking to empower women and increase gender equality (MDG3). Little research has looked at these issues in in-country contexts however. The findings from this research appear to support the above noted arguments in the Guyanese context, and suggest that because the concepts of gender equality and women's empowerment are reduced to three quantifiable indicators, the numerous complexities that underpin them remain inadequately attended to, an issue that has been well illustrated in the last two chapters. Not only has there been inadequate attention to MDG3 at the institutional level in Guyana due to the overemphasis on economic growth as well as the 'liberalizing' rather than 'liberating' form of empowerment they promote, but the high level of achievement reported on the Goals has little or no relevance for grassroots women who continue to be socially and economically disempowered.

In order for women to experience gender equality, the Caribbean activist and people's intellectual, Andaiye, urges that there must be "changes in the power relations between North and

South, and in the power relations of gender” (Andaiye, 2003, p.101). This requires full debt relief, the termination of foreign interventions that are profitable only for the donor countries, and greater attention to structural barriers that perpetuate gender, race and other hierarchies in domestic and foreign development initiatives. Existing poverty reduction and empowerment increasing initiatives, such as MDG3, are based around the flawed ideological foundation that increasing women’s participation in the market will alone result in women’s empowerment. As a result, reductionist targets and indicators such as those comprising MDG3 erroneously presume that women’s empowerment is increasing simply by measuring their presence in market-based activities, at the same time ignoring the power structures that perpetuate poverty and inequality.

In the absence of the transformative initiatives advocated by Andaiye, a point of departure could be increasing emphasis on the priorities outlined in the Beijing Platform for Action (BPFA). Albeit perceived as somewhat reductionist at their inception (Bunch & Fried, 1996), these priorities nonetheless comprises a much more comprehensive set of issues that could help address the promotion of substantive equality for women in Guyana. Comprehensively engaging with these priorities could accelerate the outcome of affording women the space to organize collectively without threat to their lives and livelihoods by reducing their time burden and the social and economic constraints placed on their lives. Only at such a time will women have the capacity to advocate for economic policy to be structured in such a way as to promote social justice and equality across all axes of difference. While governments and the international community should pay attention to all of the twelve BPFA critical areas of concern outlined in Chapter One of this thesis, a number of themes emerged particularly strongly from the interviews with grassroots women. These primarily include the following priorities: the exacerbated burden of poverty on women; inadequacies in education and training; the elimination of violence against women; and inadequate mechanisms for the advancement of women.

In relation to the exacerbated burden of poverty on women, in Guyana, 52% of women are heads of households because of both the fluid family structures which characterize Caribbean families deeming them single person households, and by women perceiving themselves to be the primary care-takers or breadwinners in nuclear families (Government of Guyana Bureau of Statistics, 2002). This issue is outlined in Chapter Six, and the findings suggest that even where there was a male partner's income in the respondent's household, it was not always shared equally or at all with the respondents, leaving some of them with responsibility for nearly all of the household expenses and the cost of caring for their children. This situation was exacerbated by women's minimal incomes and limited job opportunities as well as the additional burden of care work. Furthermore, because of sex ratios favoring women in Region 4, there are statistically more women, and therefore more poor women, in Georgetown and the surrounding area. As a result attention needs to be paid to their specific needs in order to improve the adverse economic conditions in which they live.

While all of the 12 participants had at least some secondary and even tertiary education, this did not result in qualifications that would translate to jobs or living incomes, pointing to the inadequacies in education and training which the BPFA has highlighted as a critical area of concern. Only three of 12 women were employed in the formal sector and even their incomes were too meager to support their families without reliance on other resources. Two other respondents who were once employed in the formal sector moved out of the formal economy and into the informal sector upon completion of their degrees and diplomas due to insufficient remuneration in formal employment, and the constraints that the rigid time demands imposed on child care responsibilities. Furthermore, statistics on women's participation in formal economic activities indicate a trend toward informalization, further highlighting the disconnect between education, employment, and improved lives for Guyanese women. Therefore, not only must there

be greater emphasis on job creation and training for those jobs, but some form of social assistance that would reduce the burden of care work, or conversely socially value and remunerate it in order to reduce the burden of waged labour for women. Moreover, gender bias in the curriculum which reinforces men's and women's gendered roles must also be addressed. Without the inclusion of subject matter that seeks to subvert stereotypes about appropriate behavior for men and women, existing approaches will continue to facilitate the channeling of women into domesticity and pink-collar labour or the informal economy.

The importance of the BPFAs demands for the end to violence against women was also exemplified within the grassroots interviews. Despite not being specifically asked questions about domestic violence, at least 1/3 of the respondents discussed experiences, or fear of sexual assault by partners, or strangers in the increasingly dangerous low-income neighbourhoods in which respondents live indicative of the degree to which this issues looms large in every day life. Many described how the effects of the abuse decreased their own health and quality of life, and that of their children. Furthermore, nearly 30% of women countrywide have reported being affected by physical domestic violence in Guyana (Rooplall, 2012), a figure that is unrepresentative of the epidemic of violence, as it does not include unreported cases. Eliminating violence against women must become a priority in Guyana and must be taken seriously at the level of reporting, enforcement of the law, and at the judicial level. Without ending this pandemic, women will never have substantive equality with men or experience empowerment.

In relation to the BPFA priority of inadequate mechanisms for the advancement of women, not only are there limited opportunities for women to reach the upper echelons of power, and through it affect social change in Guyana, there are also few opportunities for grassroots women to break the cycle of poverty and experience a liberating form of empowerment. Few institutional mechanisms exist to promote *de facto* gender equality. In relation to women's

experiences with low remuneration, and being underemployed, many of the respondents in the study experienced frustration and anger at the working conditions they were subjected to, and the government's lack of intervention in these areas to make their wages higher and child care responsibilities easier. A number of women reported having to leave children unattended for periods of their work day in order to fulfill income-earning responsibilities. Local NGOs have identified this as a common trend in Guyana, which has links to youth delinquency and the cycle of poverty because women are unable to provide the structure and watchful eye needed for their children when drugs, violence and crime are rampant in their communities. Furthermore, a number of women wished that it was easier to get some social assistance from the government for children's health and school fees, but household income levels have to be so low to qualify, and the stipends are so meager, it is difficult for anyone but the unemployed to receive them. These limitations make it extremely difficult to escape the cycle of exploitation of women's labour, as the care regime and their commitments to waged labour provide limited space for women to spend time on personal or social improvement activities.

These findings point to the lack of relevance that the indicators of MDG3 have for grassroots women, as none of the respondents appeared to be gaining from the indicators of MDG3. Furthermore, as discussed in Chapter Five, very little institutional attention is being paid to the Goals by either national or international organizations within Guyana. This points to the necessity of ensuring better coordination within and between organizations in Guyana in relation to policies and programs seeking to empower women and promote gender equality. Furthermore, more research is necessary to understand what the international community is doing to uphold the agreement they signed onto in the Millennium Declaration in order to facilitate a global partnership. As discussed in Chapter Two, very little is being done by donor country governments to ensure MDG8 has been met at the international level, and Chapter Five also touched on the lack of engagement that international development organizations such as CIDA, USAID and the

Delegation of the EU had with particular Goals (MDG3) at the country level in Guyana.

Moreover, more accurate quantitative data disaggregated by sex is needed in the Guyanese context. This research is particularly necessary in relation to women's poverty, time burden, high school completion rates, educational qualification levels and employment in both the formal and informal sectors in order to provide policy makers with evidence on women's position. And while it is well-known that statistical data has a higher likelihood of affecting policies and interventions than qualitative data, more of the latter is needed in relation to potential gender biases in school curriculum, to attitudes about women's and men's appropriate gendered roles and behaviours leading to domestic violence and to the continued marginalization of women.

If the current liberalizing approach to reducing poverty and gender equality continues in Guyana, unsustainable demands will continue to be placed on women's time and energy which will inevitably result in an unhealthier society plagued by deepening insecurity. Picchio (1992) makes this point exceedingly clear:

In the struggle to give priority to the needs of people within the constraints of profit, women find themselves more and more isolated in this increasingly stressful effort to change the balance of social imperatives, because the market and other institutions respond mainly to the requirements of capitalist accumulation.... (Picchio, 1992, p. 6 as cited in Elson, 2004, p. 12).

In other words, we must advocate for a reorientation of priorities that value social justice and well-being over an unadulterated focus on profit. Women will never experience gender equality without a fundamental change in how development is approached in Guyana, and as has been outlined throughout this thesis, the MDG framework has not been structured or employed in such a way as to produce those fundamental changes. Much more attention needs to be paid to the social over the economic, and the voices of the poor and marginalized need to fundamentally underpin the interventions which purport to be targeting those who are most in need of development.

Bibliography

- Abu-Lughod, L. (2002). Do Afghan Women Really Need Saving?. *American Anthropologist*, 104(3), 783- 790.
- Agostino, A. (2008). Going Beyond Development Monoculture: Critical Reflections on the MDGs. *Development*, 51(2), 228-235.
- Akram-Lodhi, H. (2009a). The Macroeconomics of Human Insecurity: Why Gender Matters. In Leckie, J. (Ed.) *Development in an Insecure and Gendered World*. (p.p. 71-90). London: Ashgate.
- Akram-Lodhi, H. (2009b). The Macroeconomics of the Millennium Development Goals: Why Gender Matters. *Development Forum*, 2(1), 12-13.
- Albanese, P. (2001). Nationalism, War, and Archaization of Gender Relations in the Balkans. *Violence Against Women*, 7(9), 999-1023.
- Andaiye. (2003). Smoke and Mirrors: The Illusion of CARICOM Women's Growing Economic Empowerment, Post-Beijing. In Tang Nain, G., and Bailey, B. (Eds.) *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion*. (pp. 73-104). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Anderson, E. (2012). Feminist Postmodernism. In E.N. Zalta (Ed.) *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy (Fall 2012 Edition)*. Retrieved on November 12, 2012 from <http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2012/entries/feminism-epistemology>
- Antrobus, P. (1993). Gender Issues in Caribbean Development. In S. Lalta, & M. Freckleton (Eds), *Caribbean Economic Development: The First Generation* (pp. 68-77). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Antrobus, P. (2005). Critiquing the MDGs from a Caribbean Perspective. *Gender and Development*, 13(1), 94-104.
- Antrobus, P. (2006). Gender Equality in the New Millennium: Goal or Gimmick?. *Caribbean Quarterly*, 52(2/3), 39-50.
- Barrow, C. (1998a). *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Barrow, C. (1998b). Introduction: The Political Economy of Labour Force Feminization, Women's Work and Gender Relations. In. C. Barrow (Ed.) *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* (pp. xi-xxxviii). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Barton, C. (2005). Where to for Women's Movements and the MDGs?, in C. Sweetman (Eds.), *Gender and the Millennium Development Goals* (pp. 25-35). Oxford: Oxfam.

- Barriteau, E. (1996a). Liberal Ideology and Contradictions in Caribbean Gender Systems. In C. Barrow (Ed.) *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* (pp. 93-114). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Barriteau, E. (1996b). Structural Adjustment Policies in the Caribbean: A Feminist Perspective. *NWSA Journal*, 8(1), 142-156.
- Batliwala, S. (2007). Taking the Power out of Empowerment: An Experiential Account. *Development in Practice*, 17(4/5), 557-565.
- Beall, J. (1997). Assessing and Responding to Urban Poverty: Lessons from Pakistan. *IDS Bulletin*, 28(2), 58-67.
- Becker, S. (1997). *Incorporating Women's Empowerment in Studies of Reproductive Health: An Example from Zimbabwe*. Paper presented at seminar on Female Empowerment and Demographic Processes, University of Lund.
- Becker, S., & Aiello, B. (2013). The Continuum of Complicity: "Studying Up"/Studying Power as a Feminist, Anti-Racist, or Social Justice Venture. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 38(2), 63-74.
- Beckles, H. (1999). *Centering Woman: Gender Discourses in Caribbean Slave Society*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Beneria, L. (2001). Shifting the Risk: New Employment Patterns, Informalization, and Women's Work. *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society*, 15(1), 27-53.
- Berg, A., & Qureshi, Z. (2005). The MDGs: Building Momentum. *Finance and Development: A Quarterly Magazine of the IMF*, 42(3), 1-8.
- Bissio, R. (2003). Civil Society and the MDGs. *UNDP Development Policy Journal*, 3, 43-56.
- Boserup, E. (1970). *Woman's Role in Economic Development*. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- Bradshaw, S., & Linneker, B. (2010). Poverty Alleviation in a Changing Policy and Political Context: The case of PRSPs with particular reference to Nicaragua. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty* (pp. 516-521). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Brereton, B. (2002). Gender and the Historiography of the English Speaking Caribbean. In P. Mohammed (Ed.) *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought* (pp. 129-146). Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
- Bryman, A. (2004). *Social Research Methods*. Second Ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buira, A. (2003). *Challenges to The World Bank and IMF: Developing Country Perspectives*. London: Anthem Press.

- Bunch, C., & Fried, S. (1996). Beijing'95: Moving Women's Human Rights from Margin to Center. *Signs*, 22(1), 200-204.
- Bureau of Statistics Guyana. (2007). *Population and Housing Census Report 2002*. Retrieved March 6, 2012 from <http://www.statisticsguyana.gov.gy/census.html#popcenfinal>
- Çagatay, N. (2005). Gender Inequalities and International Trade: A Theoretical Reconsideration. *Department of Economics, University of Utah, United States Consultado el, 2*.
- Cammack, P. (2004). What the World Bank Means by Poverty Reduction, and Why it Matters. *New Political Economy*, 9(2), 189-211.
- Caribbean Community (Caricom). (2011). The Caricom Single Market and Economy. *Caribbean Community Secretariat (Caricom)*. Retrieved on April 15, 2013 from http://www.caricom.org/jsp/single_market/single_market_index.jsp?menu=csme
- Cassell, J. (1988). The Relationship of Observer to Observed when Studying up, *Studies in Qualitative Methodology*, 1, 89-108.
- Chant, S. (2003). *New Contributions to the Analysis of Poverty: Methodological and Conceptual Challenges to Understanding Poverty from a Gendered Perspective*, (Vol. 47). New York: United Nations Publications.
- Chant, S. (2007). Gender, Cities and the Millennium Development Goals in the Global South. *London School of Economics Gender Institute*, 21. Retrieved July 23, 2011 from <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/6367/1/gendercitiesmilleniumdevgoals%28LSERO%29.pdf>
- Chant, S. (2010). Gendered Poverty across Space and Time: Introduction and Overview. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty* (pp. 1-26). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Chant, S. (2013). Cities Through a "Gender Lens": A Golden "Urban Age" for Women in the Global South?. *Environment & Urbanization*, 25(1), 9-29.
- Charles-Gumbs, I., & Stuart, S. (2011). *Progress Report on Gender Equality, Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals in the Caribbean*. Retrieved March 1, 2013 from <http://www.cepal.org/publicaciones/xml/6/45466/LCARL.356.pdf>
- Chatterjee, I. (2012). Feminism, the False Consciousness of Neoliberal Capitalism? Informalization, Fundamentalism, and Women in an Indian City. *Gender, Place & Culture*, 19(6), 790-809.
- Childs, S., & Krook, M. L. (2008). Critical Mass Theory and Women's Political Representation. *Political Studies*, 56(3), 725-736.
- Conti, J. A., & O'Neil, M. (2007). Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Global Elite. *Qualitative Research*, 7(1), 63-82

- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). (2004). *Reports of States Parties under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Guyana 1998 — 2002*. U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GUY/3-6. Retrieved July 9, 2011 from <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N00/234/40/IMG/N0023440.pdf?OpenElement>
- Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). (2010). Combined seventh and eighth reports of States Parties *under Article 18 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women: Guyana*. U.N. Doc. CEDAW/C/GUY/3-6. Retrieved January 3, 2013 from http://www.bayefsky.com/reports/guyana_cedaw_c_guy_7_8.pdf
- Cook, J. A., & Fonow, M. M. (1990). Knowledge and Women's Interests: Issues of Epistemology and Methodology in Feminist Sociology and Research. In J. M. Nielsen (Ed.), *Feminist Research Methods: Exemplary Readings in the Social Sciences* (pp. 69-93). Boulder, CO: Westview.
- Cornwall, A. (2007). Buzzwords and Fuzzwords: Deconstructing Development Discourse. *Development in Practice*, 17(4-5), 471-484.
- Cornwall, A., & Brock, K. (2005). What do Buzzwords do for Development Policy? A Critical Look at 'Participation', 'Empowerment' and 'Poverty Reduction'. *Third World Quarterly*, 26(7), 1043-1060.
- Dahlerup, D. (1988). From a Small to a Large Minority: Women in Scandinavian Politics, *Scandinavian Political Studies*, 11(4), 275-97.
- Das, M. (2000). Women's Autonomy and Politics of Gender in Guyana. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 35(23), 1944-1948.
- Deutsch, N.L. (2004). Positionality and the Pen: Reflections on the Process of Becoming a Feminist Researcher and Writer. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 10(6), 885-902.
- deVault, M. (1999a). Ethnicity and Expertise : Racial and Ethnic Knowledge in Sociological Research in M. DeVault (Ed.) *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research* (pp. 84-103). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- deVault, M. (1999b). Talking and Listening from Women's Standpoint: Feminist Strategies for Listening and Analysis. In M. DeVault (Ed.) *Liberating Method: Feminism and Social Research* (pp. 187-191). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- de Vylder, S. (2004). Gender in Poverty Reduction Strategies. In G. Johnsson-Latham (Ed.). *Power and Privileges: Gender Discrimination and Poverty*, (pp.82-107). Stockholm: Regeringskansliet.

- Driscoll, D. (2013). The IMF and the World Bank, How do they Differ. External Relations Department Publication Services International Monetary Fund. Retrieved January 1, 2013 from <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/exrp/differ/differ.htm>
- Easterly, W. R. (2007). *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done so Much ill and so Little Good*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Elson, D. (2001). For an Emancipatory Socio-Economics. In *Speech given at the UNRISD Conference on The Need to Rethink Development Economics, Cape Town, South Africa*. Retrieved January 25, 2012 from [http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/d2a23ad2d50cb2a280256eb300385855/03ba6a09be6e42d8c1256bc900453d9b/\\$FILE/elson.pdf](http://www.unrisd.org/unrisd/website/document.nsf/d2a23ad2d50cb2a280256eb300385855/03ba6a09be6e42d8c1256bc900453d9b/$FILE/elson.pdf)
- Elson, D. (2004). *The Millennium Development Goals: A feminist Development Economics Perspective*. Dies Natalis Address at the Hague Netherlands, October, 2004.
- Elson, D., & Cagatay, N. (2000). The Social Content of Macroeconomic Policies. *World Development*, 28(7), 1347-1364.
- Facio, A., & Morgan, M. I. (2008). Equity or Equality for Women-Understanding CEDAW's Equality Principles. *Alabama Law Review*, 60, 1133-1170.
- Falconer Al-Hindi, K. (1997). Feminist Critical Realism. In J.P. Jones, H.J. Nast, & S.M. Roberts (Eds.) *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, Representation* (pp. 145-164). Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Fine, B. (1999). The Developmental State is Dead – Long Live Social Capital?. *Development and Change*, 30, 1-19.
- Garner, S. (2008). *Guyana, 1838-1985: Ethnicity, Class and Gender*. Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Gelles, R. J. (1997). *Intimate Violence in Families*. London: Sage Publications.
- Ghosh, J. (2009). Informalization and Women's Workforce Participation: A Consideration of Recent Trends in Asia. *The Gendered Impacts Of Liberalization: Towards "Embedded Liberalism"*. New York: UNRISD
- Gibbs, A. (1997). Focus groups. *Social Research Update* (19). Retrieved November 5, 2012 from <http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/SRU19.html>
- Government of Guyana (1997). *National Development Strategy*. Retrieved February 1, 2013 from www.finance.gov.gy/publications/policy-doc
- Government of Guyana (2001). *Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*. Ministry of Finance Policy Documents. Retrieved July 12, 2012 from <http://www.finance.gov.gy/publications/policy-doc>

- Government of Guyana (2007). *Guyana Millennium Development Goals 2007*. Georgetown: Monitoring and Evaluation Unit.
- Government of Guyana (2011a). *Guyana Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper 2011-2015*. Ministry of Finance Policy Documents. Retrieved July 12, 2012 from <http://www.finance.gov.gy/publications/policy-doc>
- Government of Guyana (2011b). *Millennium Development Goals Guyana Progress Report 2011*. Guyana: Ministry of Finance. Retrieved May 12, 2012 from <http://www.finance.gov.gy/publications/mdgreport2011>
- Govt., UNICEF to take on children and women's rights. *Kaieteur News*. (2012, March 28). Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <http://www.kaieteurnews.com/2012/03/28/unicefsigns-us15-2m-deal-to-bolster-the-rights-of-women-children>
- Gross, G. & de Vault, M. (2012). Feminist Qualitative Interviewing: Experience, Talk and Knowledge. In S.N. Hesse-Biber (Ed.) *Handbook of Feminist Research: Theory and Praxis* (pp. 206- 236). California: Thousand Oaks and Sage Publications.
- Gurevitch, S. (2010). *Maintaining Power Through an Ethnic Divide In Guyana: A Gramscian Interpretation Of Civil Society Engagement With The Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP)*. Unpublished master's thesis, York University, Toronto, Ontario, Canada.
- Guyana doing best to achieve MDGs by 2015 : - President Ramotar on UN Day. (2012, October 25) *Guyana Chronicle*. Retrieved March 30, 2013 from http://www.guyanachronicleonline.com/site/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=50963:guyana-doing-best-to-achievemdg-by-2015—president-ramotar-on-unday&catid=2:news&Itemid=3
- Guyana Government Information Agency (GINA). (2013). *Guyana has much to celebrate on International Women's Day 2013 – Minister Webster*. Featured Posts. March 9, 2013 Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <http://gina.gov.gy/wp/?p=8635>
- Guyana making strides in gender equality – Webster. *Guyana Times International*. (2013, March 15). Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <http://www.guyanatimesinternational.com/?p=25037>
- Guyana observes International Women's Day. *Kaieteur News*. (2009, March 8) Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <http://www.kaieteurnews.com/2009/03/08/guyanaobserves-international-women%E2%80%99s-day/>
- Harding, S. (1986). *The Science Question in Feminism*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Harrison, M., Klugman, J., & Swanson, E. (2005). *Are Poverty Reduction Strategies Undercutting the Millennium Development Goals? An Empirical Review*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. Retrieved May 1, 2013 <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.199.2687&rep=rep1&type=pdf>

- Heintz, J., & Pollin, R. (2003). *Informalization, Economic Growth and The Challenge of Creating Viable Labor Standards in Developing Countries*. Amherst: Political Economy Research Institute.
- Heise, L. L. (1998). Violence Against Women an Integrated, Ecological Framework. *Violence Against Women*, 4(3), 262-290.
- Hekman, S. (1997). Truth and Method: Feminist Standpoint Theory Revisited. *Signs*, 22(2), 341-365.
- Heron, B. (2007). *Desire for Development*. Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier University Press.
- Hill, M. A., & King, E. (1995). Women's Education and Economic Well-being. *Feminist Economics*, 1(2), 21-46.
- Hill Collins, P. (1999). *Black Feminist Thought: Knowledge, Consciousness, and the Politics of Empowerment*. New York: Routledge.
- International Labour Organization. (ILO). (2008) *Global Employment Trends for Women*. Geneva: ILO.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2012). What is GUYD?. *Guyana Diaspora Project*. Retrieved Mar 2, 2013 from <http://www.guydproject.iom.int/about-mgd/>
- International Planned Parenting Federation (IPPF). (2003). *IPPF Charter on Sexual and Reproductive Rights*. Retrieved April 1, 2013 from <http://ippf.org/resource/IPPF-Charter-Sexual-and-Reproductive-Rights>
- Interparliamentary Union. (2013). Women in National Parliaments. <http://www.ipu.org/wmn-e/classif.htm>
- Ishmael, O. (2010). *Guyanese Post-Independence History*. Georgetown: GNI Publications. Retrieved June, 12, 2013 from http://www.guyana.org/features/postindependence/post_independence.html
- Johnson, R. (2005). Not a Sufficient Condition: the Limited Relevance of the Gender MDG to Women's Progress. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 56-66.
- Johnsson-Latham, G. (2004). The Answer you get Depends on your Question. What we know about Female and Male Poverty: Expression, Extent and Causes. In G. Johnsson-Latham (Ed.). *Power and Privileges: Gender Discrimination and Poverty*, (pp.20-34). Stockholm: Regerinskanliet.
- Johnsson-Latham, G. (2010). Power, Privilege and Gender as Reflected in Poverty Analysis and Development Goals. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty* (pp. 1-26). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

- Jolly, R. (2010). Employment, Basic Needs and Human Development: Elements for a New International Paradigm in Response to Crisis. *Journal of Human Development and Capabilities*, 11(1), 11-36.
- Jupp, V. (2006). *The Sage Dictionary of Social Research Methods*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Kabeer, N. (1999). Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment. *Development and Change*, 30(3), 435-464.
- Kabeer, N. (2005a). The Beijing Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals: Different processes, different outcomes. In *UNDAW Expert Group Meeting, Baku, Azerbaijan, February, 2005*.
- Kabeer, N. (2005b). Gender Equality And Women's Empowerment: A Critical Analysis of the Third Millennium Development Goal 1. *Gender & Development*, 13(1), 13-24.
- Kabeer, N. (2012). *Women's Economic Empowerment and Inclusive Growth: Labour Markets and Enterprise Development*. SIG Working Paper 1. Retrieved July 31, 2013 from <https://www.soas.ac.uk/cdpr/publications/papers/file80432.pdf>
- Kanter, R. M. (1977a) Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life, *American Journal of Sociology*, 82(5), 965-90.
- Kanter, R. M. (1977b) *Men and Women of the Corporation*. New York: Basic Books.
- Kobayashi, A. (1997). The Paradox of Difference and Diversity. In J.P. Jones, H.J. Nast, & S.M. Roberts (Eds.) *Thresholds in Feminist Geography: Difference, Methodology, Representation*. (pp.3-10). Oxford: Rowan & Littlefield.
- Lambert, L. C., & Firestone, J. M. (2000). Economic Context and Multiple abuse Techniques. *Violence Against Women*, 6(1), 49-67.
- Lawson, V. (1995). The Politics of Difference: Examining the Quantitative/ Qualitative Dualism in Post-Structuralist Feminist Research. *The Professional Geographer*, 47(4), 449-457.
- Lee, R. (1993) *Doing Research on Sensitive Topics*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Le Franc, A. & Henry-Lee, E. (2000, November). *Poverty and Gender in the Caribbean*. Document Vol. IIB Caribbean Development Bank. Port of Spain: Sir Arthur Lewis Institute of Social and Economic Studies.
- Lind, A. (2010). Gender, Neoliberalism and Post-Neoliberalism: Re-Assessing the Institutionalisation of Women's Struggles for Survival in Ecuador and Venezuela. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty* (pp. 649-654). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.

- Mahadeo, M. (2009). Increasing/Enhancing Public Awareness of International Development Issues: A Comparative Working Analysis of Formal and Informal Educational Methodology and Practice in Northern Ireland. *Policy & Practice: Development Education Review*, 8, 16- 27. Retrieved on January 7th, 2012 from <http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue8-focus2>
- Mauthner, N., & Doucet, A. (1998). Reflections on a Voice-Centred Relational Method. In J. Ribbens, & R. Edwards, (Eds.) *Feminist Dilemmas in Qualitative Research*. (pp.119 46). London: Sage Publications.
- McFadden, P. (2010). Challenging Empowerment. *Development*, 53(2), 161-164.
- Merriam, S. B., Johnson-Bailey, J., Lee, M. Y., Kee, Y., Ntseane, G., & Muhamad, M. (2001). Power and Positionality: Negotiating Insider/Outsider Status Within and Across Cultures. *International Journal of Lifelong Education*, 20(5), 405-416.
- Mies, M. (1983). Towards a Methodology for Feminist Research. In G. Bowles & R.D. Klein, (Eds). *Theories of Women's Studies*, p.p. 117-139. Boston: Routledge.
- Mikkelsen, B. (2005). *Methods for Development Work: A New Guide for Practitioners*. New Delhi: SAGE Publications.
- Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDGIF). (2013). *Advocacy and Partnership*. Retrieved Feb 1, 2013 from <http://www.mdgfund.org/content/advocacyandpartnershipAPS>
- Miott, B. (1995). Women, Work and Resistance in the French Caribbean during Slavery, 1700 1848. In Shepard, V., Brereton, B., and B. Bailey (Ed.). *Engendering History: Caribbean Women in Historical Perspective* (pp. 155- 175). Mona, Jamaica: St. Martin's Press.
- Mohammed, P. (2002). *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought*. Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.
- Mohammed, P. & Sheppard, C. (1999). *Gender in Caribbean Development*. Kingston, Jamaica: Canoe Press.
- Mohanty, C. T. (1988). Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses. *Feminist Review*, (30), 61-88.
- Mohanty, C.T. (2003). *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University.
- Momsen, J. (1993). *Women and Change in the Caribbean*. Kingston, Jamaica: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Nagar, R. (2003). Collaboration Across Borders: Moving Beyond Positionality. *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 24(3), 356-372.

- Nagar, R., & Lock Swarr, A. (2012). Theorizing Transnational Feminist Praxis. In R. Nagar, & A. Lock Swarr (Eds.) *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis*, (p.p. 1- 20). New York: SUNY Press.
- Naples, N. A. (1996). A Feminist Revisiting of the Insider/Outsider Debate: The “Outsider Phenomenon” in Rural Iowa. *Qualitative Sociology*, 19(1), 83-106.
- Nelson, P. J. (2007). Human Rights, the Millennium Development Goals, and the Future of Development Cooperation. *World Development*, 35(12), 2041-2055.
- Nikolic-Ristanovic, V. (1999). Living Without Democracy and Peace Violence Against Women in the Former Yugoslavia. *Violence Against Women*, 5(1), 63-80.
- Noy, C. (2008). Sampling Knowledge: The Hermeneutics of Snowball Sampling in Qualitative Research. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 11(4), 327-344.
- Oakley, A. (1998). Gender, Methodology and People’s ways of Knowing: Some Problems with Feminism and the Paradigm Debate In Social Science. *Sociology*, 32(4), 707-731.
- Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). (2013). *Human Rights are the Basis for Achieving the MDGs*. Retrieved January 28th, 2013 from <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/MDG/Pages/FoundationforEngagement.aspx>
- Office of the President Government of Guyana. (2010). Low Carbon Development Strategy: Transforming Guyana’s Economy while Combatting Climate Change. *Ministry of Finance Policy Documents*. Retrieved July 12, 2012 from <http://www.finance.gov.gy/publications/policy-doc>
- Oxfam. (2013). World Bank Vision Should Include Concrete Action on Inequality. *Oxfam Press Room*. Retrieved July 3, 2013 from <http://www.oxfam.org/en/pressroom/pressrelease/2013-0417/worldbank-vision-should-include-concrete-action-inequality>
- Painter, G. (2004). Gender, the Millennium Development Goals, and Human Rights in the Context of the 2005 Review Processes. *Report for the Gender and Development Network*. London: GADN. Retrieved September 29, 2011 from http://www.choike.org/documentos/mdg_women2004.pdf
- Pargass, G. & Clarke, R. (2003). Violence Against Women: A Human Rights Issue Post Beijing Five Year Review. In Tang Nain, G., and Bailey, B. (Eds.) *Gender Equality in the Caribbean: Reality or Illusion*. (pp. 73-104). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Patai, D. (1991). US Academics and Third World Women: Is Ethical Research Possible? In S. Gluck, & D. Patai (Eds.) *Women’s Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, pp. 137-153. Routledge, New York, 1991.
- Patton, M. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Third Edition. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

- Paxton, P., & Kunovich, S. (2003). Women's Political Representation: The Importance of Ideology. *Social Forces*, 82(1), 87-113.
- Peake, L. (1993). The Development and Role of Women's Political Organisations in Guyana. In J. Momsen (Ed.) *Women and Change in the Caribbean*. (pp. 109-131). London: Macmillan.
- Peake, L. (2010). Feminist and Quantitative? Measuring the Extent of Domestic Violence in Georgetown, Guyana. *Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia*, 66: 133-148.
- Peake, L., & Rieker, M. (Eds.). (2013). *Interrogating Feminist Understandings of the Urban*. New York: Routledge.
- Peake, L., & Trotz, A. (1999). *Gender, Ethnicity, and Place: Women and Identity in Guyana*. New York: Routledge.
- Peet, R. (2003). *Unholy Trinity: The IMF, World Bank and WTO*. London: Zed Books.
- Picchio, A. (1992). *Social Reproduction: The Political Economy of The Labour Market*. Cambridge University Press.
- Poland, B. D. (1995). Transcription Quality as an Aspect of Rigor in Qualitative Research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 1(3), 290-310.
- Raghuram, S. (2008). The MDGs in a World of Multiplying Inequalities and Differentiating Complexities. *Development* 51(2), 241-244.
- Rathgeber, E. (2005). Gender and Development as a Fugitive Concept. *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, 26(1), 578-591.
- Razavi, S., & Miller, C. (1995a). *From WID to GAD: Conceptual Shifts in the Women and Development Discourse*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Occasional Paper No. 1, retrieved on November 14, 2011 from <http://www.eldis.org/vfile/upload/1/document/0708/DOC1651.pdf>
- Razavi, S., & Miller, C. (1995b). *Gender Mainstreaming: A Study of Efforts by the UNDP, the World Bank and the ILO to Institutionalize Gender Issues*. United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), Occasional Paper No. 4, retrieved on November 14, 2011 from <http://www.unrisd.org/engindex/publ/list/opb/opb4/opb401.htm>
- Razavi, S., & Staab, S. (2010). Gender, Poverty and Inequality: The Role of Markets, States and Households. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty*, (pp. 427-432). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Red Thread. (1998a). *Questionnaire For Survey On The Nature And Extent Of Domestic Violence In Guyana*. Guyana: Red Thread Women's Development Programme.

- Red Thread. (1998b). *The Nature and Extent Of Domestic Violence in Guyana*. Georgetown: Red Thread.
- Red Thread. (2007). *CIDA Report*. Report Drafted Nov. 15, 2007.
- Reddock, R. (1987). Freedom Denied: Indian Women and Indentureship in Trinidad and Tobago, 1845-1917. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 20(43), 79-87.
- Rodney, W. (1981). *A History of Guyanese Working People, 1881-1905*. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University.
- Rooplall, R. (2012, January 17). 50% of Women Experience Domestic Violence in Relationships – Statistics. *Kaieteur News Online*. Retrieved on July 25, 2012 from <http://www.kaieteurnews.com/2012/01/17/50-of-women-experience-domestic-violence-in-relationships-statistics/>
- Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*. Oxford: Oxfam Publications.
- Sadasivam, B. (1997). The Impact Of Structural Adjustment on Women: A Governance and Human Rights Agenda. *Human Rights Quarterly*, 19(3), 630-665.
- Saith, A. (2006). From Universal Values to Millennium Development Goals: Lost in Translation?. *Development and Change*, 37(6), 1167-99.
- Sarantakos, S. (2005). Feminist Research. In S. Sarantakos (Ed.) *Social Research*, pp. 53-71. London: Palgrave McMillan.
- Sardenberg, C.M.B. (2008). Liberal vs. Liberating Empowerment: A Latin American Feminist Perspective on Conceptualising Women's Empowerment. *IDS Bulletin*, 39(6), pp. 18-27.
- Schech, S., & Dev, S. (2007). Gender Justice: the World Bank's new Approach to the Poor?. *Development in Practice*, 17(1), 14-26.
- Scott, D. (2004). Counting Women's Caring Work: An Interview with Andaiye. *Small Axe*, 8(1), 123-218.
- Sen, A. (1992). *Inequality Re-Examined*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.
- Sen, A. (1999). *Development as Freedom*. Oxford: University Press.
- Sen, G., & Grown, C. (1987). *Development, Crises And Alternative Visions: Third World Women's Perspectives*. New York: Monthly Review Press.
- Shepherd, V. (2002). Constructing Visibility: Indian Women in the Jamaican Segment of the Indian Diaspora. In P. Mohammed (Ed.) *Gendered Realities: Essays in Caribbean Feminist Thought* (pp. 221-248). Kingston, Jamaica: University of the West Indies Press.

- Smith, D. E. (1992). Sociology from Women's Experience: A Reaffirmation. *Sociological Theory*, 10(1), 88-98.
- Sparr, P. (1994). *Mortgaging Women's Lives: Feminist Critiques of Structural Adjustment*. London: Zed Books.
- Spinner, T. (1984). *A Political and Social History Of Guyana*. Boulder: Westview Press.
- Srinivasan, S. (2012). *Daughter Deficit: Sex Selection in Tamil Nadu*. New Delhi: Women Unlimited.
- Stiglitz, J. E. (1998, October). Towards a New Paradigm for Development. *United Nations Conference on Trade and Development*. Retrieved April 18, 2013 from <http://unctad.org/en/docs/prebis9th.en.PDF>
- Sumner, A. (2006). In Search of the Post-Washington (Dis)consensus: The 'Missing' Content of PRSPs. *Third World Quarterly*, 27(8), 1401-1412.
- Tomlinson, B. (2005). *The Politics of the Millennium Development Goals*. Retrieved January 16, 2012 from <http://www.realityofaid.org/themeshow.php?id=14>
- Trotz, A. (1998). Guardians of our Homes, Guards of Yours? Economic Crisis, Gender Stereotyping and the Restructuring of the Private Security Industry in Georgetown, Guyana. In C. Barrow (Ed.) *Caribbean Portraits: Essays on Gender Ideologies and Identities* (pp. 131-155). Kingston: Ian Randle Publishers.
- Trotz, A. (2004). Between Despair and Hope: Women and Violence in Contemporary Guyana. *Small Axe*, 8(1), 1-20.
- Trotz, A. (2010). *Who does the Counting? Gender Mainstreaming, Grassroots Initiatives and Linking Women Across Space and Race in Guyana*. In S. Chant (Ed.) *The International Handbook of Gender and Poverty* (pp. 655-660). Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd.
- Trotz, A., & Peake, L. (2001). Work, Family and Organising: An Overview of the Contemporary Economic, Social and Political Roles of Women in Guyana. *Social and Economic Studies*, 67-101.
- UNICEF signs US\$15.2M deal to bolster the rights of women, children. *Kaieteur News*. (2012, March 8). Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <http://www.kaieteurnews.com/2012/03/28/unicef-signs-us15-2m-deal-to-bolster-the-rights-of-women-children/>
- United Nations. (2011). *The Millennium Development Goals Report 2011*. New York. Retrieved September 29, 2011 from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/11_MDG%20Report_EN.pdf

- United Nations. (2012). *The Global Partnership for Development: Making Rhetoric a Reality. MDG Gap Task Force Report 2012*. New York. Retrieved January 28th, 2013 from http://www.un.org/millenniumgoals/2012_Gap_Report/MDG_2012Gap_Task_Force_report.pdf
- United Nations. (2013). Gender Mainstreaming. *UN Women*. Retrieved on April 15, 2013 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/gendermainstreaming.htm>
- United Nations. (2013). *The Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Full Text. Retrieved March 30, 2013 from <https://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#a22>
- United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Americas, & Caribbean Regional Office. (1989). *The Invisible Adjustment: Poor Women and the Economic Crisis*. UNICEF, The Americas and The Caribbean Regional Office.
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). (2002). *Progress of the World's Women, 2*. New York: UNIFEM. Retrieved September 29, 2011 from http://www.unifem.org/materials/item_detail.php?ProductID=10
- United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). (2005). *Gender and the Millennium Development Goals: More Specific Targets and Indicators for the Caribbean*. Retrieved June 20th, 2013 from <http://www.unifemcar.org/photos/Gender%20and%20the%20MDGS%20Targets%20and%20Indicators%20for%20the%20Caribbean1.pdf>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (1990). Concept and Measurement of Human Development. *Human Development Report*. Retrieved on April 15, 2013 from http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/hdr_1990_en_oervie.pdf
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2003). *Human Development Report 2003: Millennium Development Goals: a Compact Among Nations to End Human Poverty*. Oxford University Press, 2003. Retrieved January 2, 2013 from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/reports/global/hdr2003/>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2007). *Human Rights and the Millennium Development Goals: Making the Link*. UNDP Oslo Governance Centre, Oslo. Retrieved on April 30, 2013 from <http://hurilink.org/Primer-HRMDGs.pdf>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2011). Guyana. *International Human Development Indicators*. Retrieved on January 7, 2013 from <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/countries/profiles/GUY.html>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2012). Human Development and the Shift to Better Citizen Security. *Caribbean Human Development Report*. UNDP. Retrieved June 20, 2013 from <http://hdr.undp.org/enreports/regional/latinamericathecaribbean/name,24269,en.html>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Guyana. (2012). Millennium Development Goals. *MDGs Guyana*. Retrieved March 1, 2013 from <http://www.undp.org.gy/>

web/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=46&Itemid=76

- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2013a). The Millennium Development Goals Report 2013. Retrieved on July 2nd, 2013 from <http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/mdg/the-millennium-development-goals-report-2013/>
- United Nations Development Program (UNDP). (2013b). UNDP's Mandate. *Millennium Development Goals*. Retrieved on April 25, 2013 from http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/mdgoverview/mdg_goals/progress/
- United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). (2006). *Module 4: MDGs and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs)*. Indicators for Policy Management and Advocacy. Retrieved on May 1, 2013 from http://www.unescap.org/stat/meet/sl/IPMA.04_%20MDGs_PRSPs.pdf
- United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC). (1997). *Mainstreaming the Gender Perspective into all Policies and Programmes in the United Nations System*. New York: UN ECOSOC. Retrieved April 15, 2013 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/pdf/ECOSOCAC1997.2.PDF>
- United Nations Millennium Project (UNMP). (2005). Task Force on Education and Gender Equality (TFEGE). *Taking Action: Achieving Gender Equality and Empowering Women*, London: Earthscan. Retrieved September 29, 2011 <http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/Genderfrontmatter.pdf>
- United Nations Secretary General. (2009). Keeping the Promise- A Forward-Looking Review to Promote an Agreed Action Agenda to Achieve the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. A/64/665 and UN Secretary-General. Millennium Development Reports. Retrieved on January 28th, 2013 from http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/665
- United Nations Statistics Division (UNSD). (2008). *Millennium Development Goals Indicators*. The Official United Nations Site for the Millennium Development Goals Indicators. Retrieved on December 12, 2012 from <http://unstats.un.org/unsd/mdg/host.aspx?content=indicators/officiallist.htm>
- UN Women. (1995). *The United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women: Platform for Action for Development and Peace*. Retrieved on July 22, 2012 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/platform/plat1.htm#objectives>
- UN Women. (2013). *Concepts and Definitions*. Gender Mainstreaming. Retrieved July 13, 2013 from <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/conceptsanddefinitions.htm>
- Watson, H. (2001). Theorizing the Racialization of Global Politics and the Caribbean Experience. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 26(4), 449-483.
- Whitworth, S. (1994). Gender, International Relations, and the Case of the ILO. *Review of International Studies*, 20(4), 389-405.

- Williamson, J. (2009). A Short History of the Washington Consensus. *Law & Business Review America*, 15(7). p. 1-11. Retrieved Feb 20, 2013 from <http://dudotlr.iie.com/publications/papers/williamson0904-2.pdf>
- Wittig, M. (1980). The Straight Mind. *Gender Issues*, 1(1), 103-111.
- World Bank (2001). *Attacking Poverty: World Development Report 2000/01*, New York, NY: OUP.
- World Bank (2011). What are PRSPs?. *Poverty Net*. Retrieved January 4, 2013 from <http://go.worldbank.org/QP8TGIEM90>
- World Bank (2013a). *GDP Growth (Annual %)*. World Bank Poverty Indicators. Retrieved on June 10, 2013 from <http://search.worldbank.org/data?qterm=gdp%20growth&language=EN>
- World Bank (2013b). *GNI per Capita, PPP (current international \$)*. World Bank Poverty Indicators. Retrieved on January 8, 2013 from [data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD/countries/NI-HT-GT-GY BO-HN?display=](http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GNP.PCAP.PP.CD/countries/NI-HT-GT-GY%20BO-HN?display=map)
- World Bank (2013c). Guyana Overview. *Guyana*. Retrieved Mar 2, 2013 from <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/guyana/overview>
- World Bank (2013d). Guyana Total Population and Population Growth (%). *World Bank Development Indicators*. Retrieved on February 25, 2013 from <http://databank.worldbank.org/ddp/home.do?Step=3&id=4>
- Young, K. (1993). *Development with Women: Making a World of Difference*. London: The Macmillan Press.

Appendix A: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their Relationship with Human Development and Human Rights

Table A1: The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their Relationship with Human Development and Human Rights

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and their relationship with Human Development and Human Rights ⁶⁶			
MDG Targets (from the Millennium Declaration)	MDG Indicators for monitoring progress	Key Capabilities and Essential Conditions for Human Development	Key links to Universal Declaration of Human Rights
Goal 1: Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger			
<p>Target 1.A: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people whose income is less than one dollar a day</p> <p>Target 1.B: Achieve full and productive employment and decent work for all, including women and young people</p> <p>Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of people who suffer from hunger</p>	<p>1.1 Proportion of population below \$1 (PPP) per day¹</p> <p>1.2 Poverty gap ratio</p> <p>1.3 Share of poorest quintile in national consumption</p> <p>1.4 Growth rate of GDP per person employed</p> <p>1.5 Employment-to-population ratio</p> <p>1.6 Proportion of employed people living below \$1 (PPP) per day</p> <p>1.7 Proportion of own-account and contributing family workers in total employment</p> <p>1.8 Target 1.C: Halve, between 1990 and 2015, the proportion of</p> <p>1.9 people who suffer from hunger</p>	<p>Key Capability: Having a decent standard of living</p>	<p>Article 25(1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.</p>
Goal 2: Achieve universal primary education			
<p>Target 2.A: Ensure that, by 2015, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling</p>	<p>2.1 Net enrolment ratio in primary education</p> <p>2.2 Proportion of pupils starting grade 1 who reach last grade of primary</p> <p>2.3 Literacy rate of 15-24 year-olds, women and men</p>	<p>Key Capability: Being educated</p>	<p>Article 26: (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.</p>

⁶⁶ Adapted from UN Statistical Division "Official List of MDG Indicators" (UNSD, 2008), the 2003 Human Development Report "Millennium Development Goals: A compact among nations to end human poverty" (United Nations, 2003), the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (United Nations, 1948), and the UNDP Primer "Human rights and the Millennium Development Goals: Making the Link" (UNDP, 2007).

			<p>(2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.</p> <p>(3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.</p>
Goal 3: Promote gender equality and empower women			
<p>Target 3.A: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and in all levels of education no later than 2015</p>	<p>3.1 Ratios of girls to boys in primary, secondary and tertiary education</p> <p>3.2 Share of women in wage employment in the non-agricultural sector</p> <p>3.3 Proportion of seats held by women in national parliament</p>	<p>Key Capability: Being educated</p> <p>Essential Condition: Equity, especially gender equity</p>	<p>Article 2: Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration [of Human Rights], without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status. Furthermore, no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs, whether it be independent, trust, non-self-governing or under any other limitation of sovereignty.</p> <p>Article 26(1): Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit.</p>
Goal 4: Reduce child mortality			
<p>Target 4.A: Reduce by two-thirds, between 1990 and 2015, the under-five mortality rate</p>	<p>4.1 Under-five mortality rate</p> <p>4.2 Infant mortality rate</p> <p>4.3 Proportion of 1 year-old children immunised against measles</p>	<p>Key Capability: Living a long and healthy life</p>	<p>Article 25: (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.</p>
Goal 5: Improve maternal health			
<p>Target 5.A: Reduce by three quarters, between 1990 and 2015, the maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>Target 5.B: Achieve, by 2015, universal access to reproductive health</p>	<p>5.1 Maternal mortality ratio</p> <p>5.2 Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel</p>	<p>Key Capability: Living a long and healthy life</p>	<p>Article 25: (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled</p>

			to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases			
Target 6.A: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS	6.1 HIV prevalence among population aged 15-24 years 6.2 Condom use at last high-risk sex 6.3 Proportion of population aged 15-24 years with comprehensive correct knowledge of HIV/AIDS	Key Capability: Living a long and healthy life	Article 25: (1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control. (2) Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection.
Target 6.B: Achieve, by 2010, universal access to treatment for HIV/AIDS for all those who need it	6.4 Ratio of school attendance of orphans to school attendance of non-orphans aged 10-14 years		
Target 6.C: Have halted by 2015 and begun to reverse the incidence of malaria and other major diseases	6.5 Proportion of population with advanced HIV infection with access to antiretroviral drugs 6.6 Incidence and death rates associated with malaria 6.7 Proportion of children under 5 sleeping under insecticide-treated bednets 6.8 Proportion of children under 5 with fever who are treated with appropriate anti-malarial drugs 6.9 Incidence, prevalence and death rates associated with tuberculosis 6.10 Proportion of tuberculosis cases detected and cured under directly observed treatment short course		
Goal 7: Ensure environmental sustainability			
Target 7.A: Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes and reverse the loss of environmental resources	7.1 Proportion of land area covered by forest 7.2 CO2 emissions, total, per capita and per \$1 GDP (PPP) 7.3 Consumption of ozone-depleting substances 7.4 Proportion of fish stocks within safe biological limits 7.5 Proportion of total water resources used	Essential Condition: Environmental Sustainability	Article 25(1): Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.
Target 7.B: Reduce biodiversity loss, achieving, by 2010, a significant reduction in the rate of loss	7.6 Proportion of terrestrial and marine areas protected 7.7 Proportion of species threatened with extinction		
Target 7.D: By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers	7.8 Proportion of population using an improved drinking water source 7.9 Proportion of population using an improved sanitation facility 7.10 Proportion of urban population living in slums ⁱⁱ		

Goal 8: Develop a global partnership for development			
<p>Target 8.A: Develop further an open, rule-based, predictable, non-discriminatory trading and financial system</p> <p>Includes a commitment to good governance, development and poverty reduction – both nationally and internationally</p> <p>Target 8.B: Address the special needs of the least developed countries</p> <p>Includes: tariff and quota free access for the least developed countries' exports; enhanced programme of debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) and cancellation of official bilateral debt; and more generous ODA for countries committed to poverty reduction</p> <p>Target 8.C: Address the special needs of landlocked developing countries and small island developing States (through the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States and the outcome of the twenty-second special session of the General Assembly)</p> <p>Target 8.D: Deal comprehensively with the debt problems of developing countries through national and international measures in order to make debt sustainable in the long term</p> <p>Target 8.E: In cooperation with pharmaceutical companies, provide access to affordable essential drugs in developing countries</p> <p>Target 8.F: In cooperation with the private sector, make available the benefits of new technologies, especially information and communications</p>	<p><u>Official development assistance (ODA)</u></p> <p>8.1 Net ODA, total and to the least developed countries, as percentage of OECD/DAC donors' gross national income</p> <p>8.2 Proportion of total bilateral, sector-allocable ODA of OECD/DAC donors to basic social services (basic education, primary health care, nutrition, safe water and sanitation)</p> <p>8.3 Proportion of bilateral official development assistance of OECD/DAC donors that is untied</p> <p>8.4 ODA received in landlocked developing countries as a proportion of their gross national incomes</p> <p>8.5 ODA received in small island developing States as a proportion of their gross national incomes</p> <p><u>Market access</u></p> <p>8.6 Proportion of total developed country imports (by value and excluding arms) from developing countries and least developed countries, admitted free of duty</p> <p>8.7 Average tariffs imposed by developed countries on agricultural products and textiles and clothing from developing countries</p> <p>8.8 Agricultural support estimate for OECD countries as a percentage of their gross domestic product</p> <p>8.9 Proportion of ODA provided to help build trade capacity</p> <p><u>Debt sustainability</u></p> <p>8.10 Total number of countries that have reached their HIPC decision points and number that have reached their HIPC completion points (cumulative)</p> <p>8.11 Debt relief committed under HIPC and MDRI Initiatives</p> <p>8.12 Debt service as a percentage of exports of goods and services</p> <p>8.13 Proportion of population with access to affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis</p> <p>8.14 Fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants</p> <p>8.15 Mobile cellular subscriptions per 100 inhabitants</p> <p>8.16 Internet users per 100 inhabitants</p>	<p>Essential Condition: Enabling global economic environment</p>	<p>Article 22: Everyone, as a member of society, has the right to social security and is entitled to realization, through national effort and international co-operation and in accordance with the organization and resources of each State, of the economic, social and cultural rights indispensable for his dignity and the free development of his personality.</p> <p>Article 22: Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized.</p>

Appendix B: Characteristics of Organizations and Interview Respondents including key Interview Responses and Declined Interview Contact Attempts

Table B1: Characteristics of Government Bodies

Organization	Primary Functions of Organization	Integrates Gender or Women's Issues into Policies and Programs	Receives International Funding	Currently Receiving Government Subvention	Formally Subscribes to the MDG Framework	Respondent has a Clear Awareness of the Indicators of MDG3 Based on Interview Responses	Currently has Dedicated Policies and Programs for the Achievement of MDG3	Has Existing Policies and Programs that Indirectly Support Achievement on MDG3 (Gender Parity in Education, Non-Agricultural Employment and/or Political Representation)	Respondent Feels that MDG3 is Effective for Addressing the Greatest Barriers to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
Ministry of Education	-Policy and program implementation and reform -Monitoring and evaluation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Ministry of Human Services	-Policy and program implementation and reform -Monitoring and evaluation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes ⁶⁷	Yes	No ⁶⁸

⁶⁷ According to the respondent, several work plans and work programs are tailored around the indicators of MDG3, but the respondent could not remember them offhand. To get an answer about the specific work plans and work programs, I was directed to the coordinator of one of the ministry's organizations which together informally constitute the "gender team" (Women's Bureau, Documentation Center, GWLI and WoW). After interviewing with all of them however, this did not appear to be case other than the WoW program which the respondent responsible for WoW associated with the Poverty Reduction Goal (MDG1), not MDG3.

⁶⁸ Respondent indicated that policies and programs that the ministry has in place for gender equality *are* effective for improving gender equality and women's empowerment, however from my analysis, they do not appear to be related to the MDG3 indicators, and according to the respondent, would have likely been in place without the MDGs.

Women's Bureau	-Policy recommendations -Public awareness -Programming -Institutional strengthening -Networking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes ⁶⁹
Guyana Women's Leadership Institute (GWL)	-Training and education -Institutional strengthening -Networking	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes ³
Women of Worth (WoW) Microcredit Unit	-Micro-lending -Training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
National Resource and Documentation Center	-Education -Resource provision	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Women and Gender Equality Commission	-Policy recommendations -Public outreach -Capacity building	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Board of Industrial Training	-Training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	No

⁶⁹ Yes, however the respondents were referring to the gamut of policies and programs which the Ministry of Human Services has in place for achieving gender equality and women's empowerment which are largely extraneous to the indicators of MDG3 (i.e. the respondents did not have a clear understanding of what the indicators of MDG3 constitute). The respondents feel that the gender goal must be a cross-cutting issue, which the MDGs as they stand, are not.

Table B2 – Characteristics of International Organizations

Organization	Primary Functions of Organization	Integrates Gender or Women's Issues into Policies and Programs	Receives International Funding	Provides Funding at the Project Level	Provides Funding to the Government	Formally Subscribes to the MDG Framework	Respondent has a Clear Awareness of the Indicators of MDG3 based on Interview Responses	(currently) Has dedicated Policies and Programs for the Achievement of MDG3 Indicators	Has existing Policies and Programs which Indirectly support Achievement on MDG3 (gender parity in Education, Non-Agricultural Employment and/or Political Representation)	Respondent Feels that MDG3 is Effective for Addressing the Greatest Barriers to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
CARICOM Secretariat	-Policy recommendation/ coordination -Technical assistance -Research -International funding facilitation	Yes	Yes ⁷⁰	No ⁷¹	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	-Grant support -Programming -Training -Technical assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)	-Service provision -Programming -Policy recommendations -Technical assistance	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Unclear	Yes	Yes	No

⁷⁰ From Caricom member states

⁷¹ No, however the Caricom Secretariat helps to mobilize funding from international aid agencies for community projects

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)	-Policy recommendations -Technical assistance -Programming -Public Outreach	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No ⁷²	No	Yes ⁷³	No Comment
Delegation of the European Union	-Budget support -Programming	Yes	Yes ⁷⁴	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No ⁷⁵	Yes	N/A
Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)	-Project development -Capacity building -Technical assistance	Yes	Yes ⁷⁶	Yes	No	No	No ⁹	No ⁹	Yes	N/A
United States Agency for International Development (USAID)	-Macro-economic support -Technical support -Training -Programming	Yes	Yes ⁷⁷	Yes	No	No	No ⁹	No ⁹	Yes	N/A

⁷² No, however none of the themes associated with the indicators of MDG3 are the mandated responsibility of the UNFPA

⁷³ Yes, but only in relation to family planning and reducing sexual violence

⁷⁴ From European Union member states

⁷⁵ No, however it is not in the mandate of the in country offices of these agencies to work toward the MDGs

⁷⁶ From the Canadian Government

⁷⁷ From the U.S. government

Table B3: Characteristics of NGO and Civil Society Organizations

Organization	Primary Functions of Organization	Integrates Gender or Women's Issues into Policies and Programs	Receives International Funding	Currently Receiving Government Subvention	Formally Subscribes to the MDG Framework	Respondent has a Clear Awareness of the Indicators of MDG3 Based on Interview Responses	Currently has Dedicated Policies and Programs for the Achievement of MDG3	Has Existing Policies and Programs that Indirectly Support Achievement on MDG3 (Gender Parity in Education, Non-Agricultural Employment and/or Political Representation)	Respondent Feels that MDG3 is Effective for Addressing the Greatest Barriers to Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment
Red Thread	-Advocacy -Service provision	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes	No
Women Across Differences	-Programming -Public awareness -Training	Yes	Yes	No	No ⁷⁸	No	No	Yes	No
Help and Shelter	-Service provision -Programming -Advocacy	Yes	Yes	Yes	No ¹²	Unclear	No	No	No
National Working Group	-Project development -Networking	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	Unclear

⁷⁸ No, however in so far as the organization is receiving funding for a specific program from a UN body, they are directly associated with the MDG framework, albeit once removed.

Table B4: Organizational Interviews Sought but Denied

Organization	Outcome	Approximate Number of Attempted Contacts
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA)	Contacted ministry multiple times via email and phone; once direct contact was made with high level representative at the MoFA, I was referred to a high level representative at the ministry of Human Services via email; after acknowledging the referral, and requesting an interview with MoFA as well, there was no further response	10+
Ministry of Labour and Human Services and Social Security (MLHSS)	High level representative from the MLHSS called me via telephone to follow up on referred email from MoFA (see above); interview verbally agreed to by respondent via telephone; interview time booked; interview rescheduled 6 times; after last rescheduling, no effort was made to schedule the interview over the phone once I returned to Canada by the respondent's secretary despite multiple phone and email requests	10+
Ministry of Finance (MoF)	Interview agreed to by high level respondent from the Ministry of Finance; interview rescheduled 5 times; after last rescheduling, no effort was made to schedule the interview over the phone once I returned to Canada by the respondent's secretary despite multiple phone and email requests	15+
Ministry of Amerindian Affairs (MoAA)	Contacted ministry to request interview; asked to submit formal request letter and questions via email; upon doing so and following up, was told by a representative an interview would be scheduled; followed up about the interview multiple times before departing for Canada but did not receive response; contacted MoAA to schedule phone interview from Canada and was told I would receive an email response to my questions; followed up via phone and email to retrieve email response, however my calls/emails were not returned	5+
World Bank	Contacted Guyana in country office to speak to a relevant representative; spoke to a resident consultant, and was forwarded to an economist in the Jamaica office to speak to someone aware of gender issues; economist forwarded my emails to another consultant who was to answer my questions; followed up multiple times but did not receive a response; followed up with economist again and was told I would be contacted to schedule an interview in a few days; followed up again a number of times but my calls/emails were not returned	15+
UN Women (Barbados)	Contacted UN Women via email to request phone interview with a representative responsible for programming in Guyana, did not receive response; another interview respondent from within a different organization attempted to establish the connection; the UN Women respondent sought emailed me back indicating she was not in a position to be interviewed at the given moment; followed up immediately to see if she could accommodate an interview in the future -did not receive response; followed up several weeks later to see if she was settled in and could oblige an interview at that time -did not receive response; called UN Women to find out who would be the next in line to speak with; attempted to make contact with that individual and upon leaving several emails and voicemail messages did not receive a response; called at one time and she answered, asked me to send her the request and the questions; after doing so, I still received no response	10+

International Labour Organization (ILO)	Contacted ILO in country office and was told that in country office does not do any programming around gender and was told to contact high level representative in Trinidad; called and emailed multiple times but did not receive a response	5+
UK Aid from the Department for International Development (DfID)	Contacted DfID in country office and was told that the most relevant representative was out of the country until the 23 rd of July and was directed to their website for information; called a number of times after the 23 rd , was not able to get through	>5
Inter-American Development Bank (IADB/IDB)	Contacted in country office numerous times and was told someone would get back to me; asked to forward my questions via email to an administrator; followed up several times but no response; several weeks later I received an email with an attachment about the IDB's Women in Development approach to their policies and programming internationally; followed up to re-request an interview but received no reply	5+

Table B5: Characteristics of Grassroots Respondents

Participant	Recruited	Neighbourhood of Residence	Location of Interview	Age	Self-Identified Race	Religion	Education	Marital Status	Length of Union	Living with Partner	Number of Biological Children	Number of Children Respondent Currently Cares for in Household	Occupation	Primary Income Earner	Identified Self as Head of Household
#1	Masjid	Alboustown	Masjid	47	Afro-Guyanese	Muslim-Christian	Secondary	Married	25 years	Yes	2 (both passed away)	1 nephew	Janitor	Yes	Yes
#2	Masjid	Alboustown	Masjid	54	Mixed race	No Religion	Some secondary	Married	38 years	Yes	15 (3 passed away)	5	Precarious labourer	Yes	No ⁷⁹
#3	Independent canvassing	Sophia	Red Thread	33	Mixed race	Christian	Secondary	Visiting relationship	9 years	No	4	4	Janitor	Yes	Yes
#4	Masjid	La Penitence	Masjid	34	Mixed race	No Comment	Some university	Married	11 years	Yes	1	1	Day-care worker	Yes	Yes
#5	Red Thread	Charlestown	Home	44	Afro-Guyanese	Hindu	Secondary	Visiting relationship	7 years	No	3	3	Administrator	No	Yes
#6	Red Thread	La Penitence	Home	28	Mixed race	Christian	University	Visiting relationship (long distance)	1 year 5 months	No	1	1 biological child, 1 nephew	Nurse	No	Shared ⁸⁰
#7	Red Thread	La Penitence	Red Thread	40	Mixed race	Christian	Secondary	Common Law	25 years	Yes	3	3	Shop owner	Shared ⁸¹	Yes
#8	Red Thread	Charlestown	Home	46	Mixed race	Christian	Some college	Separated	20 years	No	2	2 grandchildren	Care worker (home maker)	No	Yes
#9	Red Thread	Charlestown	Home	49	Indo-Guyanese	Christian	Some secondary	Visiting relationship	4 years	No	10 (1 passed away)	4 biological children, 1 adopted child	Domestic	No	Yes
#10	Independent canvassing	Harmony (suburb of Georgetown)	Place of Employment	35	Mixed race	Christian	Some secondary	Married (long distance)	17 years	No	9	9	Market vendor	No	Yes
#11	Independent canvassing	Sophia	Cafe	41	Afro-Guyanese	Christian	Secondary	Common Law	7 years	Yes	4	3 biological children, 1 stepchild	Domestic	Yes	Yes
#12	Independent canvassing	Kitty	Place of Employment	31	Mixed race	Christian	College	Married	6 years	Yes	1	1 biological child, 2 siblings	Food Stall owner	Yes	Yes

⁷⁹ Identifies mother, not husband, as head of household

⁸⁰ Between self and sister

⁸¹ Between self and common law partner (joint business owners)

Appendix C: Sample Interview Guides

Appendix C1 - Interview Guide for Organizational Respondents

A few questions about your organization

- 1) What is your position, and what are you responsible for in this position?
- 2) What does the _____ do broadly? What kinds of programs does the _____ have in place for _____?
- 3) Does the _____ have a working definition of gender equality/women's empowerment? If so, how does the _____ define those terms?
- 4) (If relevant) How long has the _____ been working toward gender equality and women's empowerment?

A few questions about the MDGs

- 5) Are you/the _____ aware of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)? If so, when were you introduced to them?
- 6) Are you aware of MDG3, the goal seeking to increase gender equality and empower women? Are you aware of its respective indicators?
- 7) Do you feel that the indicators align with a) the _____'s definition of empowerment and gender equality (if relevant)? Why or why not? b) The _____'s approach to achieving its mandate?

A few questions about the _____ and the MDGs

- 8) Has the _____ been involved with the MDG framework? Why or why not?
Probe: (IF INVOLVED) Did the _____ seek to be engaged in this framework on its own, or were you asked to be involved with it? Please explain. (In other words how was the _____ introduced to the MDG framework [when, how, for what reasons?])?
- 9) Have the MDGs had an impact on the kinds of projects _____ engages in? Has anything changed for _____ since the implementation of the MDG framework?
Probe: i.e. Types of projects, working climate, efficacy of projects, availability of funding, etc.?

A few questions about specific MDG policies

- 10) Has _____ put any MDG3 policies or programs into place? If so, what? Are these policies and programs in any way different from your previous policies and programs? How?
- 11) Do you receive funding for this MDG programming? If so, is it related to any particular Millennium Goal? What is the structure of the funding? **Probe:** Do you apply or do donors approach you? Do donors influence your decisions? Does the Government influence your decisions/mandate? Why/How?
- 12) Who are the intended beneficiaries of your MDG3 programs and policies? (Location, age, class, race, etc.) How do you measure the outcomes?
- 13) How effective do you perceive the MDG programs _____ has been involved in to be across location? Age? Class? Race? Location?

A few concluding questions

- 14) Do you feel that the MDG framework is effective for promoting the kinds of programs and making the kinds of changes _____ is mandated to implement? Why or why not?
- 15) What do you see as the greatest barriers to achieving gender equality and women's empowerment for women in Georgetown? Do you feel that the MDG framework is addressing them? What else could be done if anything?
- 16) Is there anything else you think I should know about _____ that you did not have an opportunity to discuss? About the MDGs? About Gender Equality?
- 17) Do you have any questions for me?

Appendix C2: Interview Guide for Grassroots Women⁸²

SECTION ONE: DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

I'd like to start by getting some background information:

1. Can you tell me how old you are?

1. How do you describe your race?

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Afro-Guyanese | <input type="checkbox"/> White |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Indo-Guyanese | <input type="checkbox"/> Chinese |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Mixed | <input type="checkbox"/> Amerindian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to respond | |

3. What is your religion?

- | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Christian | <input type="checkbox"/> Hindu | <input type="checkbox"/> Buddhist |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Muslim | <input type="checkbox"/> Rastafarian | <input type="checkbox"/> Bahai |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jehovah's Witness | <input type="checkbox"/> Fatist | <input type="checkbox"/> Vedic |
| <input type="checkbox"/> None | <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to respond |

4. Do you regularly attend your place of worship?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

5. A) What about your schooling... how far *you* went in school?/ What is the last school you attended?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> none | <input type="checkbox"/> primary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> community high | <input type="checkbox"/> secondary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> technical vocational | <input type="checkbox"/> tertiary/university |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to respond |

B) How long you been at the school (years or months).....

C) You mind if I divert for a moment? Would you say you were able to apply what you learned in school to your daily life? **Probe:** What you learn in school, did it help your children, your relatives or the community, did it help you when you went looking for a job? (i.e. helping with day to day activities in the household? Raising children? In your occupation/career?)

⁸² Adapted from Red Thread (1998) "Questionnaire For Survey On The Nature and Extent of Domestic Violence in Guyana"

D) What about with making decisions in your home?

6. So how about your current marital status? **(If None go to Q.8)**

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Married | <input type="checkbox"/> Common Law (live home) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Visiting relationship | <input type="checkbox"/> Never in a union |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Divorced/Separated | <input type="checkbox"/> Single |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Widowed | <input type="checkbox"/> Decline to respond |

7. How long have you been in this relationship/union?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> under 1yr. | <input type="checkbox"/> 1- 5 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 - 10 years | <input type="checkbox"/> 11 - 20 years |
| <input type="checkbox"/> over 20 years | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to respond |
- Exact length.....

8. How about children? Do you have any children of your own?

Yes ☐ No ☐

(If No go to Q.11)

9. Boys? Girls? How old are they? Do you still care for any of them in the home? How many?

10. How old were you when you had your first child?.....

11. Do you have any children living elsewhere? You mind if I ask why they don't live with you?

Sex	Age	Location (Place and with whom)

12. Do you care for any other children at your home?

Yes [] No []

(If No go to Q.15)

13. How are they related to you:

.....
.....

14. If you have or care for children, do they go to school? (if no, why not?) Do you mind if I divert a bit again??.... How far they gone in school? What do you think about the quality of your children's education? Are they doing alright in school?

- A) When they are finished school for the day, and over the summer, do the children help around the house? In what ways (cooking, cleaning, earning income)? Boys, role?
Girls, role?

The next set of questions get a little more personal... I would be happy for you to answer, but there is no pressure at all, so if you aren't comfortable, just tell me you would rather skip...

15. Other than you and your children, who else lives in your household (i.e. those people who eat out of the same pot)?

- A) How are they related to you? Do any of them depend on your care?
B) Who would you say is the head of the household?
C) Does the household head support the other people in the household? Do they all contribute?
D) How many rooms do y'all share excluding kitchen and bathroom? How big is your home? Do you feel you have enough space?
E) So all of you who live and eat together... (and I am especially interested in you...) What do you do in a typical day.... let's say a Wednesday... **Probe:** So tell me things like what time y'all get up, who is responsible for ensuring the children are ready for school, are fed, what time you leave for work, what you do in the day, what time you come home, what you do after you get home, when the children and husband come home, what they do... when the children do their homework... if they help you with cooking, or each other with homework, what you do in the evening, what time you all go to bed.

16. You mind to tell me how you eat meals in a typical day (together, separate, etc.)? Are *YOU* eating enough (sometimes when we are too busy we forget to eat, and then when you remember there isn't any left back!)? Are you able to eat daily exactly what your mind calls for?

- A) Would you say there are there some people in your household who eat more, or are better off in health than others? Why or why not?
17. Do you do any work for money whether in the home or outside of the home?
- A) If so, are you formally employed? What do you do? How many hours per day do you work for money? (**Probes** Do you work on the weekends? Do you work the whole year? How many jobs?)...
- B) What do the children do when you are out working?
- C) Between paid work and running the house, how much do you sleep??
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Professional, Technical and Related | <input type="checkbox"/> Clerical and Related |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Administrative and Managerial | <input type="checkbox"/> Craft or related worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service worker/ shop sales worker | <input type="checkbox"/> Construction worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Worker in transport & communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture, forestry, fishing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> Informal economy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Precarious/petty vending | <input type="checkbox"/> Refuse to respond |
18. Do you have any other way of making money (ways that you might not even consider "work")? Remittances, child support, boxhand, assistance from a partner etc.?
19. If it isn't too much to ask, you mind me asking how much you make through the paid work you do? In a day, week or month? (whatever point of reference makes most sense).
20. So this money you work for, who spends it, you get to spend it, or do you hand it over to someone? Why/Why not? If it is someone else, how do they spend the money?
21. Does anyone else contribute to the income of the household or is it you alone?
22. What kinds of expenses do you have? This money, when you finish paying your expenses, do you have any left back to put up?(i.e. Are you able to cover your expenses with this income?)
23. What do you do when times are tight? Anybody help you? What kinds of things do you do to bring down the cost of running your household? **Probe:** You do any boxhand, night/weekend work, work for money while in the home? Sharing of responsibilities between neighbours (child care? Food sharing, etc.?)?
- A) You ever get help from friends, family, neighbours, husband? Boyfriend? Do you feel like you have to pay them back in some way?

24. This question steps back a little bit, but relates in part to income earned. What kinds of decisions does the head of the household make about finances, children, household repairs etc.? Are there decisions that are made by you, by the head of the household or others?

A) Who makes the “important” decisions in the household? How do you define what decisions are “important”?

B) Could you describe the types of decisions you are talking about? Do you mind if I list a few?

Item	RESPONSIBILITY FOR DECISION MAKING			
	Self	Partner	Both	Other
Food				
Child maintenance (clothing, books, medicine, lessons, school fees)				
Household repairs				
Major purchases e.g. (equipment: stove, Washing machine, refrigerator)				

25. How free are you to make the kinds of decisions you want to make in your household? In your own life? Are there ever things you wish you could do or make decisions about, but can't? **Probe:** What are the barriers constraining you from making those decisions (people, money, culture etc.?)?

I would like to ask you some really personal questions about your thoughts and feelings about your household, your relationships and your opinion about a few words.

26. If you are in a relationship, are you happy in it? **Probe:** If not, what factors have influenced you to stay in the relationship?

27. Do you ever feel vulnerable (physically, emotionally, financially etc.?)?

28. Do you feel empowered to make positive changes in your life? (Like you have power to make changes in your life?)

29. Are you happy in your life? Is there anything in your life you would change? If there is anything you could change in your life, what is it? **Probe:** If yes, do you feel as though you have the power to change it? What do you think you would need/need to happen in order for those changes to occur?

30. How do you feel the government and/or various organizations in Guyana could help you?
Do you think enough is being done?

Those are all of the questions I had today, and I want to deeply thank you for taking this time out of your day to talk to me. Is there anything that we didn't touch on that you would like to add? What did you think of the interview? Do you have any questions for me? They can be about the interview, the research, me personally. Anything you might like to know.
